

The Formation of Conscience: Pedagogy of the Sacred

Beryl W. Holtam, BAsC., BEd.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate  
Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University  
St. Catharines, Ontario

© Beryl W. Holtam 2010

## Abstract

This qualitative study explores Thomas Green's (1999) treatise, *Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience*; for the purpose of reconstruing the transformative usefulness of conscience in moral education. Conscience is "reflexive judgment about things that matter" (Green, 1999, p. 21). Paul Lehmann (1963) suggested that we must "do the conscience over or do the conscience in" (p. 327). Thomas Green "does the conscience over", arguing that a philosophy of moral education, and not a moral philosophy, provides the only framework from which governance of moral behaviour can be understood. Narratives from four one-to-one interviews and a focus group are analysed and interpreted in search of: (a) awareness and understanding of conscience, (b) voices of conscience, (c) normation, (d) reflexive emotions, and (e) the idea of the sacred. Participants in this study (ages 16-21) demonstrated an active awareness of their conscience and a willingness to engage in a reflective process of their moral behaviour. They understood their conscience to be a process of self-judgment about what is right and wrong, and that its authority comes from within themselves. Narrative accounts from childhood indicated that conscience is there "from the beginning" with evidence of self-correcting behaviour. A maturing conscience is accompanied by an increased cognitive capacity, more complicated life experiences, and individualization. Moral motivation was grounded in "a desire to connect with things that are most important." A model for conscience formation is proposed, which visualizes a critical path of reflexive emotions. It is argued that schools, striving to shape good citizens, can promote conscience formation through a "curriculum of moral skills"; a curriculum that embraces complexity, diversity, social criticism, and selfhood.

## **Acknowledgements**

From the very first course in my Master of Education studies, I have been the recipient of Professor Michael Kompf's support and encouragement. Michael saw in me the potential to produce a promising thesis and the capacity to accomplish the task, long before I knew my thesis topic, and even before I was re-familiarized with the discipline of academic studies. I am very grateful for his enduring guidance as my thesis advisor. I discovered early on that my theological interests were never far from the surface of my attention. I found in the Rev'd Dr. Brian Ruttan an engaging tutor for the multidiscipline literature review upon which I had embarked, and an excellent advisor in planning out my research within the context of the Church. As a Thesis Committee member, Brian contributed right to the end, even providing helpful editorial corrections. The timing of Anne Elliott's guidance was perfect as the supervisor of an Independent Study. With great compassion, she gently directed me through a reflection process that concluded with the formation of a preliminary purpose statement for my thesis. Anne's support was very welcome and it continued when she agreed to be a member of my Thesis Committee. The very important and necessary work of editing and proof reading was made easier with the assistance of my spouse, Alan Cook. His keen interest in literature and his deep commitment to me gave him the capacity to plough through this weighty document. I have enjoyed my studies immensely, often sharing my enthusiasm with many friends and family and receiving their support in return. I would especially like to thank a fellow student, Christiane, for persistently enquiring on my progress and adding her insightful thoughts. Finally, thank you to my brother and sister-in-law, Bryan and Annie, and to their wonderful children, Charlotte and Simon, for making my overnight stays in St. Catharines so enjoyable.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vi
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	 1
Background.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Rationale and Theoretical Framework.....	7
Purpose of Study.....	8
Questions Addressed.....	8
Importance of Study.....	9
Scope and Assumptions.....	11
Outline of Remainder of the Thesis.....	15
 CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	 16
The Educational Formation of Conscience: Thomas Green's Treatise.....	19
The Nature of Conscience.....	21
Reflexive Emotions/Moral Emotions.....	22
Truth and Knowledge.....	24
Reasoning: A Critical Attitude.....	26
Absolutes and Fundamentalism.....	27
Voices of Conscience.....	32
Conscience and Goodness.....	35
Normation.....	39
Formation and the Developed/Mature Conscience.....	42
"Things that Matter": The Sacred.....	47
Implications for Education.....	51
Summary.....	54
 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RELATED PROCEDURES.....	 56
Theoretical Background.....	56
Participant Demographics.....	58
A Normative Community.....	58
Procedures.....	59
Data Collection.....	64
Data Analysis.....	65
Ethical Considerations.....	66
Methodological Assumptions.....	67
Limitations.....	67

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS (ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION).....	71
One-to-One Interviews.....	72
Focus Group.....	93
Interpretation and Discussion.....	103
Chapter Summary.....	118
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS.....	119
Summary.....	119
Educational Implications and Future Research Questions.....	120
A Model of Conscience Formation.....	129
Related Research.....	131
Closing Comments.....	133
References.....	134
Appendix A: Glossary of Formation of Conscience Terms.....	142
Appendix B: Focus Group Design and Questions.....	143
Appendix C: Individual Interview Design and Questions.....	145
Appendix D: Research Ethics Board Clearance Letter.....	148
Appendix E: Excerpts from Sarah's Interview.....	149
Appendix F: Excerpts from Susan's Interview.....	153
Appendix G: Excerpts from Tommy's Interview.....	157
Appendix H: Excerpts from Jennifer's Interview.....	162
Appendix I: Excerpts from Focus Group.....	164

## List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1: Conscience at the intersection.....	2
Figure 2: A model of conscience formation.....	130

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

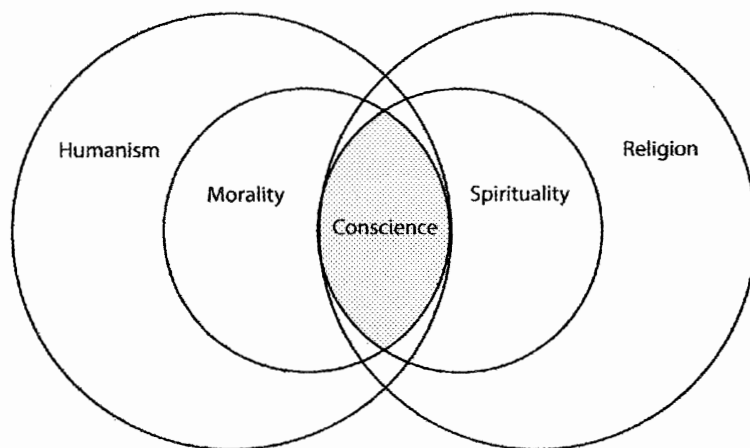
“There is no witness so dreadful, no accuser so terrible as the conscience that dwells in the heart of every man.” Polybius, Greek historian (205 BC - 118 BC; as cited in Dukas & Hoffman, 1979, p. 66).

This is a study of *conscience*, defined as “reflexive judgment about things that matter” (Green, 1999, p.21), its formation and its expression in moral conduct, as proposed by Thomas Green (1985, 1999). This study is an exploration of particularity, reflexivity, and moral emotions that inform the formation of conscience through normation, understood as “the acquisition of social norms, norms that take on the role of governance” (Green, 1999, p. 23). By *particularity* it is understood that ethical considerations are rooted in one’s peculiar station or role. By *reflexive* it is understood that it is judgment that each of us makes in our own case. And by *moral emotions* it is understood as the associated feelings that serve the binding force of self-judgment.

This study attempts to identify the *voices of conscience* and their formation. This study also extends Green’s (1999) thesis and considers the relationship between moral development and spirituality by accounting for the motivation to be moral: *the sacred*. By sacred I mean that which provokes awe or reverence, a stirring of a sense of mystery (Green, 1999, p.113).

This study does not resolve the debate on which morals, virtues, and character traits define a universal moral personality (product), but explores a basis and language that advocates for the cultivation, deepening, and elaboration of the conscience (process).

For the purpose of this study, conscience is understood as the common factor binding morality and spirituality; humanism and religion (Figure 1). Motivated by things



*Figure 1.* Conscience at the intersection.



that matter, the essence of conscience resides at the core of all primal, pre-interpretive personal (religious) experience (James, 1929).

### **Background**

The concept of *conscience* was established in primitive cultures and in Greek philosophical writings. Its evolution is enfolded in a history of moral philosophy, moral theology, and moral development most prominently in its historical partnership with sin and guilt, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. However, conscience formation has not commanded much attention of its own. Although a quiet player in current discourse, many 20<sup>th</sup> century authors identify *conscience* in their writings from a perspective other than one of a religious or guilt perspective (Lipman, 2008; Noddings, 2008; Tacey, 2004; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Perhaps not surprisingly, the attribute of *conscientiousness* is a common personality trait between moral, spiritual, and religious domains (Walker, 1999). And now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the fields of neuroscience, biology, and even behavioural economics, have joined the traditional disciplines of philosophy, theology, and psychology, taking an interest in moral behaviour and in topics such as the existence of the goodness impulse and the “God spot.” Yet, understanding conscience and its formation has had very limited empirical exploration.

Conscience formation, historically, is also evident in the field of education. From the time of earliest philosophers, a good education was presumed to lead to wisdom, a good life, and happiness. Good conscience was implied in good moral education. John Dewey (1976), an influential early 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and educator, wrote, “The conscientious man ... would seek to discover the true good, to value his ends, to form

ideals, instead of following impulse or accepting any seeming good without careful consideration” (pp. 12-13).

At the time of establishment of the first public educational system in Ontario, Canada, Egerton Ryerson (1871) wrote,

while conscience is our original faculty of the mind, and its authority more or less in every situation ... God, who has endowed us with our moral powers, has entrusted to us and imposed upon us the duty of cultivating them by heeding their admonitions and acquainting ourselves with our duty. (p.53)

In her thesis, Sharon Marie Bowler (2002) examined *The Protestant Conscience in Ontario Education*. She wrote, “Pre-Confederation newspapers and Protestant paper articles were devoted to the topic of conscience development in the schools. Many articles were written warning the reader to be aware of an education that was free of any form of conscience development” (p.89).

Bowler (2002) found that, in pre-Confederation Canada, conscience was understood to be formed and maintained by the study of the Bible and religion. It was a Protestant conscience, and the Protestant work ethic that formed the identity of the school system.

In Western society, mutual suspicion was established first between Protestant and Roman Catholic theology, and in later times emerged between Christian and non-Christian religions. Given the historical marriage of conscience to moral theology, suspicion continues to surface between religious and secular camps when there is any suggestion of a religious leaning in moral education. This suspicion continues to act as a

barrier to advancements in the fields of moral education, holistic education, and spiritual education.

The field of moral development and education is vast and not without controversy. In the 1970s and 1980s, Lawrence Kohlberg (1972, 1984) critiqued the relativity of values and proposed a *philosophy of moral education*, rather than a *moral philosophy*. That is, he proposed a philosophy that aimed to understand the nature of moral learning.

During the same era, criticism abounded that there was an “overintellectualizing” of moral development (Power, Hiddins, & Kohlberg, 1989). Even at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Walker (1999) argued that contemporary moral psychology and education continued to overemphasize rationality at the neglect of moral virtues and personality. In what he identified as exploratory research, Walker examined the perceived personality characteristics of moral exemplars across the moral, religious, and spiritual domains. Since the initial study, he has continued to provide empirical research on personality and moral functioning. Walker’s attention, however, has been on the virtues and attributes associated with the moral personality. He acknowledged that such a listing of virtues would be “incoherent for one person to embody”, that there “simply cannot be a single transcultural ideal or moral personality”, and that moral excellence is contextual to social, political, religious, and linguistic circumstances (pp. 11-12).

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century educational efforts in Western Society to advance moral development were situated in the context of a democratic society, defining morality by the norms of the culture and its central moral institutions, with the ultimate goal being to govern behaviour. As the advancement of democracy takes a global focus,

and as Western Society evolves to account for a multicultural presence, the *norms* become less universal and more diversified, specific to specific communities, and to communities within communities. As well, in complicated moral situations, and in the context of diversity, norms (morals, values) compete. Our diverse, multicultural, multifait, and increasingly nonreligious society, therefore, is plagued with misunderstanding that often turns into conflicted behaviours.

Efforts have been made to promote moral, virtue, and character education in Canada and overseas (Carr, 1995, Rossiter, 1996, York Region District School Board, 2003). Moral and Character Education, however, has often failed to succeed in forming good citizens and governing behaviours. Research shows there is a noticeable gap between cognitive judgment and moral action (Frimer & Walker, 2008). Furthermore, critics have argued that the familiar and popular *transmission model* of knowledge dissemination, often used by schools, inhibits the acquisition of the morals, values, and character traits that are sought. A more urgent need has been identified to understand the formation of a moral system as it applies to behaviour, rather than the associated attributes of morally correct behaviour, that is, to address the philosophy of moral education rather than a moral philosophy. Conscience formation promises to address that need.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem in this study is to examine conscience formation as a meaningful and viable framework for moral education. The nature, function, and value of *conscience* are addressed, situating it in an historical context of philosophy and moral development. The problem is the identification and examination of the competing internal voices that speak

to things that matter, the sacred; (a) how those voices are established (normation); (b) how they are cultivated, deepened, and elaborated (development); and (c) what reflexive (moral) emotions are identifiable. This problem is located in an educational framework for conscience formation that is efficacious in a society of diversity (multicultural, multifaith, and nonreligious).

### **Rationale and Theoretical Framework**

Thomas Green (1985, 1999) proposed conscience formation as a philosophical framework for moral education. He defined conscience as “reflexive judgement on things that matter” (1999, p. 21), formed by the acquisition of norms that take on the role of governance. Green (1999) suggested that conscience is activated in the presence of the sacred, “in a world where nothing is sacred, moral education is impossible” (p. 112). And he argued that the absence of the sacred is not the secular, but the banal, the ordinary, the mundane (p. 114). Conscience (self-judgement) often is expressed through competing voices (craft, membership, sacrifice, memory, imagination). Its development is demonstrated when competing voices are “cultivated, deepened, and elaborated” (p. 29). In conscience formation the focus is on practice (tools for living) not on rules and obedience; where “freedom, intelligence and fallibility are fundamentals” (Alexander & Ben-Peretz, 2001, p. 39). For Green, as in many educational movements today, it is about good citizenship.

Green’s (1999) focus is not on the moral personality and its traits but on the acquisition, through normation, of moral norms. Rather than building upon controversial universal virtues, his framework builds upon voices of conscience, reflexive judgment, and reflexive emotions. Green’s thesis recognizes the cognitive/affective partnership in

moral (conscience) formation. Green's work on conscience formation, therefore, stands alone with no other competing framework available. It is a participant, however, in the perpetual and historical debate regarding moral development and truth, reason and moral feelings. Although Green's thesis received critical praise (Alexander, 2000; Diller, 2003; Kaufmann, 2003), the formation of conscience has had very limited attention, with no published empirical research of which I am aware. In his book, *Voices, The Educational Formation of Conscience*, Green (1999) built an extensive presentation of his treatise upon which research can proceed, and offers a specific, refined, and innovative perspective.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to use individual experiences of *conscience formation* to reconstrue the transformative usefulness of conscience in moral education. Dialogue and personal narratives will be used to examine Green's (1999) treatise of conscience formation. By reconstrue I mean to establish a revised vocabulary where moral development is understood as the formation of conscience.

### **Questions Addressed**

1. To what extent is there individual (group) awareness of conscience?
2. What are the voices of conscience?
3. What role does normation play in conscience formation?
4. Is there an "other" voice of conscience, not bound by normation and prudence?
5. What reflexive emotions are dominant, or more developed, in conscience formation?
6. How does the sacred define "things that matter?"

### Importance of Study

This study can contribute to research in a number of ways. First, the very importance of the concept of conscience will be reconsidered. Conscience is a word, a notion, which seems to have been lost in modern history; perhaps trapped in an antiquated context that when discarded “threw the baby out with the bathwater.” Nevertheless, conscience persists as a psychological function and, in these new days of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an examination of its nature, function, and value offers a promising attempt at reestablishing its place in moral education.

Further, I hope this research will succeed in establishing a solid argument for the need to reexamine the popular framework for moral/character education that has typically identified curriculum *outcomes* as broadly defined and culturally valued morals, virtues, and character traits. The focus instead would be on the process of conscience formation; a process that attends to reflexivity, particularity, and associated feelings. The focus goes beyond the cognitive approach of Kohlberg’s (1972) theory of moral development, criticized for its over emphasis of cognitive reasoning, and will provide a cognitive/affective framework for moral development that is not hierarchical, or bound by stages. For Green (1999), his treatise is a response to the need “to revise our very vocabulary for thinking about moral education” (p. 1).

This research can stimulate further work in a search for a critical path in conscience formation and to move research forward in a developmental theory of reflexive emotions.

This research can inform the current “democratization” of character formation and good citizenship. It demands a critical examination of the desired outcome for conduct

that is externally controlled, versus the internal acquisition of norms that govern behaviour. It confronts the lack of trust in self-governance, and confronts the utopian tendencies of educational models in a democracy.

This research can advance holistic education by liberating spirituality and morality from religion; where the motivation of conscience, “things that matter”, the sacred, can be honoured in a public educational system. Green’s (1999) framework on conscience formation, his very thesis, opens a promising door to the issues of spirituality, spiritual formation, and spiritual education. David Tacey (2004) in his book, *The Spiritual Revolution*, wrote,

spirit in a sacred context, with reference to a universal or cosmic power, is too religious or theological for the secular academy to deal with. Yet it is in this sacred context that many students are talking about spirit today (p. 58).

Current times are demanding a serious attempt to better understand and integrate the notion of spirituality in public education. Tacey, in his own university teaching, is finding such a way, and he has identified the importance of the conscience.

Youth spirituality is more interested in listening to the inward conscience than obeying the external dictates of religious authority. Young people seem to believe that conscience, not an outside authority or tradition, is the true moral guide. This reliance on conscience is a product of modernity and the democratic principles inherent in contemporary society. (p. 80)

My inquiry, therefore, incorporates an exploration of the sacred, that is, the motivation of conscience. In doing so, this study extends the scope of future research into the domain of spirituality.



Finally, research in conscience formation, such as this study, can contribute to advancing a multidisciplinary approach to research. As a relatively *unresearched* topic, the potential opportunity of pulling together various threads that have quietly established themselves in fields, such as philosophy, theology, psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, and biology, is an exciting one.

Evidence of the educational formation of conscience is there to find in contemporary culture. In a commentary on the Obama inauguration, the retired American Episcopal Church Bishop, John Spong (2008) wrote,

When Barack Obama was sworn in as President of the United States, two things happened simultaneously and subliminally. First, in his identity as an Afro-American he demonstrated that racism was finally no longer an acceptable way for any American to live. Second, in his invitation to the openly gay Episcopal Bishop, Gene Robinson, to offer a prayer at the inaugural ceremony, he declared that homophobia is no longer an acceptable alternative for either the church or the society. That is what leadership does. (Para. 10)

### **Scope and Assumptions**

The consensus throughout history has been that conscience, however it has been explained, is a natural disposition. Its existence, although argued by some to be in decline (Lehmann, 1963), still endures as a persistent trait of human character. This study takes such a position as a fundamental assumption. There is no other single psychological function that can substitute for the conscience.

With conscience historically embedded in moral philosophy, moral theology, and moral development, it is necessary to clarify first what this study is not about.

This research is not about moral theology or even moral philosophy, but, as argued by Green (1999), it is about the philosophy of moral education. As already stated, it is not an attempt to identify a set of virtues or character traits of good citizenship, nor is it an attempt to defend the universality of moral traits, (product). It is about the “stimulation of moral development”, the formation of conscience (process).

This research is also not another version of moral *reasoning* as understood and advanced in Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1984) work. It is about moral *behaviour*. With regards to this judgment-action gap as identified by Frimer and Walker (2008), Green’s (1999) thesis provides a bridge. He wrote,

having good reasons for good conduct, even divine reasons, is not enough if our interest is moral education. The aim of moral education is that beyond good reasons we have good conduct and good character, that our conduct comes to be *governed* by moral norms. (p. 115)

This study is not about the *transference of knowledge* regarding morals/values/beliefs/character traits, but is about the acquisition of the social norms that govern moral behaviour, where knowledge is only but a participant, a resource, in the process of conscience formation.

This research is not about religious doctrine, although it is, possibly, about spirituality, and the personal response of awe and wonder to the mystery of the sacred. Walker (1999) recognized that the role of religion and spirituality in moral functioning had not garnered much attention, partly due to Kohlberg’s (1972, 1984) conviction to moral reasoning. He did point out, however, that “Kohlberg did retreat somewhat from his rigid view with his postulation of a soft Stage 7 that justifies Stage 6 moral principles

through an appeal to metaphysical and religious epistemologies” (p. 4). The sacred is found in the primal personal experience, the place where the “more” exists (James, 1929) for which conscience is a cognitive/affective response. Conscience begins in the prereligious interpretation of the primal experience.

Theologically, this is a highly contested issue. Historically, the voice of conscience was attributed to an all powerful deity. Although no longer exclusively understood this way by most mainstream Western Christianity, there continues to be a strong position that there is, in fact, an ultimate, indefinable, voice of authority to which a complete surrendering is required. Although I will honour this perspective as a research question, for the purpose of an operational definition, a “voice” of conscience is defined as that which is acquired through normation. The nature of the sacred remains vague, and its role is only to point to “things that matter.”

This study, therefore, is not about absolutes or fundamentalism. “Education is not about initiation into exclusive (‘putative’) moral ideals, but only those that embrace the conditions of ethical discourse: *freedom, intelligence and fallibility*” (Alexander & Ben-Peretz, 2001, p. 39). There is a strong following in holistic education that incorporates diversity where a *matured*, developed conscience would be understood as including: the capacity to “defamiliarize” the experience (Green, 2008, p. 158); the capacity to “embrace the question” and to “seek the paradox” (Palmer, 2008, p. 292); and the capacity to embrace being “unfinished” (Freire, 2008, p. 214).

This study assumes the historical association of *conscience* with *goodness*. The notion of conscience has always implied the opposing ideas of right versus wrong, good versus evil. A developed conscience would be evident in good character as judged by the

community. However, if my research, and Green's (1999) thesis, is to offer a reconstrued philosophy to moral/character education, then it might be argued that there is a risk that popular, culturally desired morals, character traits, and virtues, are not what, in the end, the individual acquires (Tucker, 2009). A conscience formation approach to moral education, by virtue of its very essence, invites contemplation of the complexity and diversity of the human experience. Rather than the focus being on outcomes of *goodness*, the goal should focus on *intention* and the development of *good will*.

Attached to the goodness debate is the contentious and typically misunderstood issue of personal versus public conscience. For the purpose of this research, there is no such distinction. Conscience is understood as a public act in response to a personal experience. By this I mean that although the experience of conscience belongs to the individual, that is, "the individual transacts the business by himself, alone" (Green, 1999, p. 74), "conscience is shaped only within some membership and for the sake of life within the membership so formed" (Green, 1999, p. 70). It is a public matter. To further understand this operating assumption I would refer the reader to Green's (1999) extensive exploration of this principle (pp. 70-75).

A final assumption is that although the thesis of conscience formation, as presented by Green (1999), does indicate development, it is not a hierarchical path with an ascension through a higher order of voices of conscience. There is no developmental sequence, but voices "side by side...more incisive, more rational, more passionate, more perceptive, more discerning, and more expansive in their scope" (p. 61). The seeds of all voices are planted with the primal experience and the capacity to process these voices is innate. I do, however, entertain the notion that there may be a critical path in conscience

formation, and a development of reflexive emotions, perhaps indicating the relationship between core and reflexive emotions.

### **Outline of Remainder of the Thesis**

In this chapter I have provided an introduction to the topic of my thesis, conscience formation, specifically the educational formation of conscience. I established my research within the framework of the treatise of conscience formation as proposed by Thomas Green (1985, 1999). By choosing Green's work, I am choosing to pursue a philosophical approach to moral and character education, not a moral philosophy. The rationale, scope, and assumptions of my research are identified.

By focusing on Green's (1999) work, I am also setting manageable perimeters to a topic historically lost in the shadows of the much broader field of moral development. In Chapter Two I establish *conscience* in its historical framework. I will only touch on related work, primarily to demonstrate the persistence and growing pervasiveness of conscience within the historical fields of philosophy, theology, and psychology, and now emerging across multiple domains. This chapter attempts to establish a theoretical foundation that supports a revision of the vocabulary for thinking about moral education.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology and procedures that were used for the study. The theoretical background is identified and the research phases are laid out. Ethical considerations, methodological assumptions, and limitations are explored.

Chapter Four reviews the research results, and Chapter Five provides a summary, discussion, implications, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The intent of a literature review is to familiarize the reader with the area of enquiry and to explain the present research by beginning to address the questions posed in the objectives of the study or path of inquiry. Typically, parameters for the literature review are clearly defined as a way of indicating the specific focus the research is taking, as well as controlling the volumes of potential material that could be included. These directives do not offer much clarity when approaching the topic of *conscience formation*. A simple data search using only the term *conscience* yields eclectic results, few of which offer any more than a passing reference. Enter the term *conscience formation* and essentially the search comes up empty. Likewise, a search of the university catalogue for books yields limited results.

As a subject term, *conscience* does not stand well on its own, but is embedded (to various degrees) in the topics of ethics and morality. Historically it is found in the domains of philosophy, theology, and later, of psychology. As a concept, conscience was first established with the Greek word *syndersis* (or *synteresis*) and in Latin the word *conscientia*. The concept was confined to moral philosophy signifying *consciousness*, and knowledge within oneself, in a general sense (Oxford University Dictionary, 1933).

It was not long before the notion of conscience almost exclusively was married to moral theology and Christian ethics, taking on the moral attributes of good and evil and framed in a narrative of salvation history. The Western ethical tradition that eventually established itself secured forever the association of conscience with a theology of guilt; the primitive goal of conscience being to avoid punishment and seek reward from an external judge (i.e., God).

Influenced by St. Paul, “the Fathers of the church explicitly make the last step in the interiorization of conscience. Conscience now becomes the voice of the human person himself and only immediately and indirectly the voice of God” (Curran, 1966, p. 15). St. Augustine (354-430 AD), trying to reconcile Christian and classical culture, faith and enquiry, explained how the answer to all basic theological questions is God and, acquiring truth and understanding came through direct experience of the ultimate or spiritual reality (Johnson & Reed, 2008).

Aquinas (1225-1274), Luther (1483-1546), and Kant (1724-1804) were significant contributors to developments in the notion of conscience. Curran (1966) referred to a famous controversy of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries about the question of “probable conscience” and the obligation to follow law. “As a result of the controversy, *De Conscientia* became a separate and well-developed treatise in the manuals of moral theology” (p. 15). The result of what Curran called “the defects of the manualistic treatises” (p. 16) was that conscience became negative, oppressive, and sin oriented.

Curran (1966) in his work titled, *The Christian Conscience Today*, summarized the historical influences of philosophy and psychology. He wrote,

Outside the pale of theology, two divergent tendencies - exaggerated exteriorization and over-objectivization - have destroyed the true notion of conscience. Ever since Descartes, philosophers like Montaigne, Rousseau, and Kant have overemphasized the subjective element. Existentialism, the last step in the tendency, makes subjective conscience the center of the whole world completely cut off from God or any other subject. At the other extreme,

conscience is considered merely a function of physiological factors (Chauchard), psychological factors (Freud), or sociological factors (Durkheim). (pp. 16-17)

In the Roman Catholic Church there exists a long tradition of discourse establishing conscience in doctrine (Anosiki, 2000; Curran, 1966; Rudin, 1973). Anosiki reported that since the time of the Scholastics no very great advances had been made in the theology of conscience until the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, where “conscience has received much prominence in moral theology. Today it has become a theme for theological debates, seminars and conferences” (p. 11). In current literature, the brand of “Catholic conscience” continues to stand on its own, tied strongly to guilt and sexual behaviour (Vaisey & Smith, 2008).

A formational or developmental approach to conscience, at best, can only be inferred in character development, as first found in Greek philosophy (Plato and Aristotle), and later moral development as established by Lawrence Kohlberg during the 1970s.

Rarely does conscience command its own focus of study. Yet in current literature, conscience continues silently but persistently to creep into treatises, crossing multiple domains. It quietly emerges as a key thought in topics such as: ethics of caring (Noddings, 1993), spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2000), personality traits of moral exemplars (Walker, 1999), pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 2008), and youth spirituality (Tacey, 2004).

Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is evidence of a liberating of the concept of conscience away from the popular but narrow confines of the foundational understandings. In the field of theology there has been an effort to break free of



prescribed theological doctrines, stepping back to the primal spiritual, pretheological, experience that is at the core of all religious interpretations. In psychology, *conscientiousness* has been identified as a moral personality trait, an indication of goodness, and a component of spiritual intelligence.

This liberation has also been facilitated by cross-disciplinary movements. In the fields of neuroscience and evolutionary biology, empirical research into the *universal goodness impulse* has been published. As well, related research has indicated evidence of the “God spot” (a module in the brain). Research in behavioural economics is looking at ethics and honesty. Development psychologist, Thomas Green (1985, 1999), is interested in the *educational formation of conscience*.

Because the purpose of this study is to reconstrue the transformative usefulness of conscience formation as a philosophy of moral education, this literature review will attempt to connect the dots throughout history and across disciplines as they speak to each other on the topic. Green’s (1999) treatise on conscience formation is the framework from which those dots will be situated. Historical and more current literature will be examined as it informs (or otherwise not) the ethical nature, function, and importance of conscience formation, as presented by Green.

### **The Educational Formation of Conscience: Thomas Green’s Treatise**

Thomas Green (1985) in an essay entitled, *The Formation of Conscience in an Age of Technology*, examined moral education in relation to judgment and governance. Arguing that “the presiding concern of a philosophy of moral education is simply governance” (p. 5), Green established the notion of self-governance of conduct. He suggested that “each of us has the capacity to judge our own conduct and even to stand in

judgement on what we discern to be the composition of our own affections” (p. 3).

Introducing the notion of *conscience*, Green called it a “reflexive judgement” that is always accompanied by certain “moral like” emotions. By reflexive judgement, Green (1999) means “judgement that each of us makes in our own case” (p. 21). Green identified not one, but multiple voices of conscience that exist side by side: the voice (a) as craft, (b) as membership, (c) as sacrifice, (d) as memory, and (e) as imagination. Attending to all these voices of conscience and their formation, for Green, should be the focus of education rather than moral philosophy and principles.

In his treatise, *Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience*, Green (1999) offered an approach to moral education that he firmly states is a philosophy of moral education, not, a moral philosophy. “a philosophy of moral education must aim to understand the nature of moral learning” (p. 17). In doing so, Green established his treatise in a framework detached from the various “boxes” we must all define ourselves by in order to function in society, and advocates only for the attending to the process of conscience formation and the normation that sustains those boxes.

Green (1999) plunged into an understanding of conscience that is not burdened by an historical evolution of definition. Embedded throughout Green’s thesis, however, were various concepts whose roots are located in foundational philosophical and theological writings; concepts such as judgment, prudence, norms and normation, reflexivity, governance, the sacred, moral emotions, and citizenship.

These concepts form the elements of his thesis, yet its framework remained liberated from any popular line of thinking and any previous theoretical system. Although Kohlberg’s (1984) theory of moral development established the groundwork

for a “philosophy of moral education” Green’s (1999) treatise went beyond a stage theory of moral judgment, offering instead a cognitive/affective approach to moral education.

### **The Nature of Conscience**

Green (1999) wrote, “Each of us from time to time renders judgment on our own actions and even on our own character. This is a fact known to everyone, a fact beyond question” (p. 21). And, in fact, writers throughout history speak of conscience in this way:

“a disposition ingrained in man’s whole nature” (Rudin, 1973, p. 95)

“a natural power within the soul” (Curran, 1973, p.132)

“an original faculty of mind” (Ryerson, 1871, p. 56)

“a kind of built-in monitor of moral action” (Macquarrie, 1970, p. 111)

“a primordial phenomenon, present in man from the beginning” (Schar, 1973, pp. 93-94)

By nature, conscience has been understood to have the power to shape behaviour, both through judgment and through action (Lehmann, 1963). Frimer and Walker (2008) wrote “most now agree that Plato’s famous dictum that ‘to know the good is to do the good’ is empirically unsubstantiated... [this is] what has become known as the ‘judgment-action gap’” (p. 334). Conscience bridges this judgment-action gap.

Also, by its nature, conscience can be engaged both prior to and following behaviour. Green (1999) described conscience to be reflexive judgment in “prospect and retrospect.” It determines behaviour in advance by examining potential consequences (foresight), and corrects behaviour by looking back (retrospect).

Fundamentally, there is freedom to conscience; “the authentic act of conscience is the result of a wholly free and personal decision” (Rudin, 1973, p. 104). It functions within the individual. “In the last resort each man must decide for himself what is right or wrong” (Mortimer, 1973, p. 123).

In conscience there is a cognitive/affective bond that is inseparable, just as water (H<sup>2</sup>O) is composed of two bonded yet different elements, hydrogen and oxygen. When separate, these elements do not resemble what they were when in union as water. This inseparable “union”, the capacity to think and to feel, is evident in Ryerson’s (1871) statement,

everyone *knows* (italics added) that he perceives certain actions to be right or wrong. Everyone *feels* that it is wrong to lie, to steal, to murder, to be cruel. Everyone *feels* that it is right to tell the truth, to be honest, affectionate, kind, and grateful. (pp. 50-51)

At its core, in its most primitive understanding, there is a dual nature to conscience, that of standard and passing judgement. “Conscience is ... the expression of man’s inner awareness, with special reference to ethical conduct” (Schar, 1973, p. 83).

### **Reflexive Emotions/Moral Emotions**

Popular history of conscience highlights the “retrospect” view, specifically through the emotion of guilt. Green’s (1999) thesis, notably, did not focus exclusively on “guilt”, but took a broader sweep of “associated moral emotions.” Citing Mills, Green (1999) defended Mill’s view that “a mass of feeling” is what essentially constitutes conscience.

The central role of feeling in the formation of conscience is implicit in the fact that normation necessarily structures the emotions of self assessment. Normation is what gives specific content to the emotions of guilt, shame, pride, regret, ... remorse, among others, and thus makes it possible for self-deception to have its risks. (p.26)

These are reflexive emotions, emotions of self-assessment, and, according to Green (1999), others include embarrassment, disapproval, anger, censure, moral rejection, regret, abhorrence on the part of others, as well as, elation, pride, self-assurance, and joy. Green made a point to explain that reflexive emotions differ from other emotions, such as fear and hope, which are not essentially reflexive and, therefore, are not essentially structured by normation. By being reflexive there is a cognitive/affective essence to moral emotions.

It is interesting that Rudolf Otto (1958) in *The Idea of the Holy*, reflected on emotions and the tendency to lump them into "rough division." He wrote,

We should see the facts more clearly if psychology in general would make a more decisive endeavor to examine and classify the feelings and emotions according to their qualitative differences. But far too rough a division of elementary feelings in general into pleasures and pains is still an obstacle to this. (p. 16)

Green's (1999) effort to identify reflexive emotions and to address, with some depth, their distinction from hope and fear, is perhaps a response to Otto's (1958) observation. As Green examined the cognitive/affective union of reflexive motions, he in essence encouraged an examination and possibly a classification of emotions. If, for Green, development in conscience formation is the cultivating, deepening, and

elaboration of moral emotions, then what emotions constitute a more matured conscience? Is there an ordering of reflexive emotions that reflect a deeper maturing, complexity, or awareness? Is, for instance, integrity a higher order emotion, since it would not typically be associated with children? Yet, gratitude, a simpler emotion and evident in children, is not easily acquired in a person's moral character at any age. Where does trust fit in? This is a virtue established by most in early childhood but which then seems to be lost with aging.

### **Truth and Knowledge**

As noted above, fundamental to the nature of conscience has been the notion of *standards* and the recognition that these standards are “written upon the heart” as truths.

In Hebrew, the words for ‘compass’, ‘conscience’, and ‘the hidden inner truth of the soul’ all come from the same root. To have a conscience is to be in touch with the hidden, inner truth of the soul and, if we are so in touch, we have an internal compass to guide us in our behavior. (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p. 209)

As truths, they operate at the feeling level as if ingrained forever. Although cognitively they are *known*, knowing comes from a primal cognitive process, intuition. There is much variability over the understanding of truth and its relation to knowledge.

Egerton Ryerson (1871) wrote,

But while some truths ...are intuitively perceived, other truths are arrived at by a process of reasoning....Often the truth of a proposition depends upon the truth of several other propositions, the truth of each must be known before the truth of the first proposition can be known. (p. 53)

In all our reasonings in regard to either duty or doctrine, the human mind is liable to err, as it is not infallible; but of intuitive truths we are as certain as we are of our existence, or that we see an object or hear a sound. (p. 53)

Macquarrie (1970) made a similar distinction between moral knowledge and factual knowledge.

There is universal agreement among moral philosophers that a moral act...is characterized by both freedom and knowledge on the part of the agent. The agent is free, in the sense that he is not completely determined to act in the way he does, either by external circumstances or by internal drives. He acts with knowledge, both moral knowledge of what is right and wrong, and factual knowledge of what he is doing and the circumstances under which he is doing it. (p. 118)

Regarding the nature of moral truth and ethics, psychologists Zohar & Marshall (2000) in their work on Spiritual Intelligence wrote,

Einstein and Heisenberg helped to bring a fundamental change in our relationship to truth and ethics....Truth depends upon our point of view, upon the questions that we choose to ask. This is a bottom-up truth, which in some fundamental sense comes from within. It is...ultimately a truth that we can access only with our Spiritual Intelligence. (pp. 202-203)

Parker Palmer (1983), from a theological perspective, wrote about knowledge and truth. "In this secular age, with religion on the wrong side of the fact-fantasy divide .... I am ultimately concerned not only with knowledge but with truth. Most academic disciplines have largely abandoned truth in favor of facts and reasons" (p. xii). "Modern

knowing has the capacity to turn upon itself and open itself to correction, a capacity premodern knowledge did not possess” (p. 26).

Dewey and Tufts (1908) offered an interesting observation regarding knowledge. They wrote,

we discriminate between different kinds of knowledge as the Greeks did not, and as they had no occasion for doing. .... Knowledge meant to them something more personal; something like what we call a “realizing sense”; an intimate and well founded conviction. (p. 375)

In summary, what might be suggested is that the intuitive truths of conscience are much like the *standards* identified in the original philosophical writings. The *judgment* component of the dual nature of conscience is a cognitive/affective process that can evolve established truths (standards) with new knowledge. New understandings permeate into established intuitive truths and become one with them, thus taking on the same intrinsic power of certainty. For Dewey and Tufts (1908) modern conscientiousness is what the Greeks called *wisdom*.

### **Reasoning: A Critical Attitude**

Regardless of the nature of the standards or truths upon which the conscience draws, the notion of “reflexive judgment” is the other fundamental component of the dual nature of conscience found in the earliest philosophical writings. To this end, conscience engages reason. “Aquinas’s view is that conscience is reason commenting on conduct”; that is, it is “using critical good sense” (Green, 1999, p. 23).

Both knowledge and reason, for Green (1999), have a distinct place in the formation of conscience relevant when indicating “reflexivity.” He wrote, “contrary to



what Aquinas seems to hold, it [normation] is not a special instance of the acquisition of knowledge, although it implies possession of various kinds of knowledge” (p. 25). The standards or truths which the conscience engages are the norms that are acquired through normation to govern conduct. There is knowledge contained within the norms that are acquired. Norm acquisition, however, “requires the adoption of a certain critical attitude toward departures from the rule, the attitude that in some sense these departures are wrong, that these errors are indeed errors...” (Green, 1999, pp. 37-38). Green noted that good behaviour should not be sacrificed to “unthinking habit” but that critical attitude to appraise behaviour is necessary for an active conscience. Critical attitude is the judging, reasoning face of conscience, through which there is self-correction and the caring to correct others. Green (1999) emphasised, “These notions of ‘correct’, ‘incorrect’, and so forth are not *produced* by the adoption of this critical attitude in learning. Their presence is a *part* of that critical attitude, not a consequence of it” (p.38). What is the right thing to do then is identified by the individual’s conscience, not by external forces or authorities. Here is the freedom and the cognitive/affective union as discussed above.

### **Absolutes and Fundamentalism**

The place of reflexive judgment and critical attitude in the nature of conscience indicates a fluidity to truth, as previously suggested. Although *syndersis* implies an intrinsic knowing of truths (at a feeling level), the consensus is that ultimate truths remain within ultimate reality, and fallibility is a given. “Man has an infallible knowledge of the moral principles, the natural law, through synderesis [syndersis], but he has a conscience which is able to fall into error in every concrete decision” (Tillich, 1973a, p. 52).

William James' (2005) analogy for the primal (he would also call religious) experience is that of a "corridor" from which "systems" of belief branch. It is the corridor in which "differences and infinity reign" and where there is universal (unconditional) truth. James argued, "There is but one indefectibly certain truth...the truth that the present phenomenon of consciousness exists" (p. 101). All other truths are at risk of being "reinterpretable." Experiences that form and reform our beliefs, and determine our actions, James suggested, are those that are "interesting and important"-the product of "pleasure or pain."

James (2005) identified two ways in which truth is believed, the absolutist' way and the empiricists' way. "The absolutists ... say that we not only can attain to knowing truth, but we can *know when* we have attained to knowing it; while the empiricists think that although we may attain it, we cannot infallibly know when" (p. 101). The empiricist is more likely to embrace doubt and enquiry. The absolutist would more likely resist a re-arrangement of preconceptions, or ignore them, even deny them.

Returning to Dewey's (1908) writings on conscience and conscientiousness, he suggested that modern conscientiousness tends to fix attention on the voluntary attitude which is interested in *discovery*, rather than the achieved insight of Greek wisdom. It is about pursuit rather than possession. "The morally important thing is the desire and effort to discover the good..." (p. 377).

In mainstream Western society absolutes and fundamentalism are typically looked upon with caution, even within religious traditions. In Roman Catholic Church doctrine the final authority of conscience is fundamental (Anosiki, 2000).

Tucker (2009), speaking from the specialized perspective of evolutionary biology and neuroscience, recognized that “there is a growing consensus that tentative absolutes do exist” (p. 241). However, he warned the reader:

More importantly, and controversially, the science of morality may bring into doubt some of our most deeply ingrained cultural perceptions about right and wrong. We’ll have new, richer opportunities to examine our actions in the presence of consequences. We probably won’t like what we see. (p. 25)

Gairdner (2008) in *The Book of Absolutes; A Critique of Relativism and a Defense of Universals* argued that “it is laws and principles, constants and universals, that dictate and describe the existence of particulars, not vis versa” (p. xii). He advocates for a return to “traditional natural law” with a hierarchical moral framework where how we know what is right is “written on the heart” and the dominant passion is the common good. Natural law, according to Gairdner, provides a transcendent standard, and is always a quest for absolute values, justice, and truth. It is only variation of law that is concerned with “discovering the transcendent principles of a higher law that can serve as a compass pointing to the highest and best ends of human existence [the common good]” (p. 183).

Pattison (1973), a psychologist, suggested that “there is consensus that tentative absolutes do exist and are not at all at odds with the emphasis of the situational ethicists”. He argued that “absolute values must be translated into operational and group values that are to be taken as the moral norms of behavior” (p. 241).

Green’s (1999) treatise would fall in line with this thinking, for if norms are acquired through normation than they are never free of contextuality or “particularity.” If universal truths and norms (social values) do exist they would be difficult to identify and

would never be certain. They would only be found in the corridor where “differences and infinity reign.” Following Green’s treatise, one hypothesis might be that in order for there to be universal truths or norms, then they would have to come from a voice for which normation is not a criterion.

Green (1999) did caution against “the utopian threat” from seekers of a social order of perfection, whether they be conservatives, liberals, or radicals. He wrote, “Social perfection, planned for and educated for, is hard to come by except through suppression, censorship, or violence of some kind” (p. 11). We hear this same warning from the work of British historian, John Gray (2007), author of *Black Mass Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*, interviewed on the CBC program, *Ideas*, Thursday, January 22, 2009. Gray challenged unrealistic and utopian patterns of thinking which hold on to the belief that a huge revolution could bring about a new world. He suggested historically utopian projects have religious roots but now have a secular expression as well, politically in both the far left and neoconservatism. Although there are certain *goods* that are good for all human beings and certain evils that are bad, even universal values conflict, and protecting *rights* can lead to violence. As examples of “radical utopia movements” Gray offered communism, global free trade, and democratic capitalism.

It is interesting to note that many of the historical and current trends in moral education focus on the goal of good citizenship. In our current times this is more refined where the emphasis is put on the ideal moral citizen in a *democratic* society. However, through Gray’s (2007) perspective, the Western world’s notion of democracy may, in fact, be at risk of reflecting a “utopian project”, unrealistic in its approach in a world with

complex and diversified practices of democracy. Barack Obama (2006) seemed to recognize this, and the importance of *reason* as discussed above, when he used the phrase “pluralistic democracy” in a 2006 speech to the Sojourners’ *Call to Renewal* conference.

With regards to the abortion issue he stated,

Democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific, values. It requires that their proposals be subject to argument, and amenable to reason.

I may be opposed to abortion for religious reasons, but if I seek to pass a law banning the practice, I cannot simply point to the teachings of my church or evoke God’s will. I have to explain why abortion violates some principle that is accessible to people of all faiths, including those with no faith at all.

Now this is going to be difficult for some who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, as many Evangelicals do. But in a pluralistic democracy, we have no choice. Politics depends on our ability to persuade each other of common aims based on a common reality. (para. 42-44)

Recognizing circumstances such as above, Green (1999) shared with Kohlberg (1984) a commitment to a philosophy of moral education, not a moral philosophy. He wrote,

If moral philosophy is concerned with the architecture of the moral institution of life, then the philosophy of moral education deals with how we enter it; if moral philosophy studies the shape and content of a mature conscience, then a philosophy of moral education asks how we come to own that kind of conscience; if moral philosophy addresses the nature of virtue, then a philosophy of moral

education is concerned with how virtue is spread and the worldly conditions of its spread (p. 16).

### **Voices of Conscience**

“Morality is of the highest importance – but for us, not for God”. *Albert Einstein* (Dukas & Hoffman, 1979, p. 66)

Guilt and fear of punishment was the function of the primitive understanding of conscience (Tillich, 1973a). And although conscience was fundamentally understood as the attending to an inner voice, the source of this inner truth for early Christian societies was believed to be an external authority, that of God, accessed through revelation (Kristeva, 2007). With Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) there came a shift away from an independent “external” authority, to an internal authority, that of “reason.” Lehmann (1963) wrote, “Something like a *domestication* of conscience has occurred. The ominous, sometimes even terrifying fury of the guilty conscience has been tamed by a divine infusion of the rational soul” (p. 332). The voice of conscience was still God’s voice, but heard through an internal capacity to reason.

Einstein (as cited in Dukas & Hoffman, 1979), however, did not hesitate to challenge this popular theological premise that God was the voice of conscience. Ahead of his time, Einstein critiqued an established understanding of God as a personified, personal God. “I cannot conceive of a personal God who would directly influence the actions of individuals, or would directly sit in judgment on creatures of his own creation” (p. 66). For Einstein, the religious experience is

more a feeling of awe at the scheme that is manifested in the material universe. It does not lead us to take the step of fashioning a god-like being in our own image -

a personage who makes demands of us and who takes an interest in us as individuals. (as cited in Dukas & Hoffman, 1979, p. 66).

By putting aside God, yet still considering himself a religious man, Einstein (as cited in Dukas & Hoffman) freed the *sacred* from established religion and focused on the primal spiritual experience. In so doing he invited alternative ways of relating to that mystery and the truth and knowledge accessible through that experience.

Parker Palmer (1983) talked about the shift away from the dualism of the knower and the known; the subjective and the objective. Quoting Richard Gelwick, one of Polanyi's leading interpreters, Palmer wrote, "The separation of the knower and the known is no longer convincing even *though* that separation is *institutionalized* in our habits of thought, our ideals, and our organization of life" (p. 29). "Truthful knowing weds the knower and the known; even in separation, the two become part of each other's life and fate" (p. 31). It is the wedding of the knower and known that is the "conscience." This understanding helps to emphasize the internalization, the strong normation that happens before the full power of the conscience is witnessed.

There are other narratives, however, besides the religious that provide the moralism (norms) for behaviour. Keeping in mind that the knowledge and truths that are accessed must still be internalized sufficiently to compel to action, their sources are many and emerge from all aspects of life.

Green (1999) picked up this modern/postmodern thinking. While he honoured the idea that the reflexive judgement of conscience has "authority... as though from a distant, impartial, disinterested perspective" (p. 22), he did not confine this authority to a single, external voice. Conscience speaks to us in different voices, "commenting upon matters

that lie far beyond the boundaries of morality [typically, and] narrowly conceived” (p. 22). “Sometimes it speaks not of right or wrong, of what is just or unjust, but of what is wise, foolish, or skilful” (Green, 1985, p. 3). Instead of one voice, Green (1999) offered five voices of conscience: the voice of (a) craft, (b) membership, (c) sacrifice, (d) memory, and (e) imagination, and he acknowledged this list is incomplete, even fluid. All these voices have power, individually or in symphony with each other, to determine moral behaviour.

The first voice is that of *craft*, a voice of prudence, understood as the ability to judge one's own performance by (self-imposed) standards of what is good, what might be better and what is unacceptable. The conscience of craft is the capacity for self-congratulation for a task well done, and self-embarrassment for careless or slovenly work.

The formation of a conscience of *membership* is the second voice. It speaks to our affections, our relations to others, or ties of membership to some group.

The third voice is the voice of *sacrifice*. It speaks to us of duty, even against our inclinations, proclaiming the lofty principles of our obligations. “At other times conscience calls us to rise above principle and to do the thing that not even duty commands” (Green, 1985, p. 4).

The voice of *memory* is the fourth voice. Conscience as *memory* is the voice of our "rootedness", our “history as remembered” from which we draw moral sustenance from the multitude of narratives, stories, meanings, and sources, that provide a glimpse of our historical roots.



The fifth voice of conscience is the critical voice of *imagination*. It develops from the voices of membership and memory and is the most difficult voice to form. It is a prophetic voice that “speaks to other members about the chasm that exists between the hopes and fair expectations of the community and the failures of our lived lives” (Green, 1985, p. 23).

For Green (1985), all these voices may, in fact, be present at the beginning of life, and all must be present at the end. They might not ever speak in “unison, harmony or resolution”, but may even be competing in our day to day activities.

### **Conscience and Goodness**

“There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience.” (French Proverb)

Moral education is “forging good people and good lives” (Green, 1999, p. 11). The notion of the good conscience, historically, was only understood as the absence of the bad conscience (Tillich, 1973a). Typically, when the impulse for goodness is not adhered to, the outcome is the experience of guilt and a call to resist evil. This tension has been caricatured in cartoons with a miniature person perched on each shoulder engaged in debate, one with a good or angelic robe and voice and the other with the evil or devilish robe and voice. But as Einstein (n.d.) suggested, goodness need not be the absence of fear and guilt. “If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed”.

Aristotle declared that “every art and every enquiry, ... every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim” (Lehmann, 1963, p. 167). Tillich (1973a) defined synteresis

as “a perfection of our reason which leads us towards the recognition of the good” (p. 51).

Curan (1966) defined synderesis as “the moral goodness of a particular act” (p. 136).

As these quotes suggest, goodness was widely thought to be the motivation of conscience. Goodness is implied in synderesis, and by association, in conscience. The motivation for goodness can engage the conscience in “prospect” without the associated feeling of fear. In researching moral exemplars, Walker (1999) did not indicate that these individuals are living lives motivated by fear, but instead are motivated by love and deeply altruistic feelings towards humankind. Citing Walker’s work on moral personality traits, Walker and Reimer (2006) wrote,

The sophistication of participants’ religious rationales for moral choices varies, ranging (in developmental progression) from straightforward fear of eternal damnation or anticipation of heavenly rewards, to the importance of a shared faith community, and then to rather principled notions of agape love and forgiveness. (p. 226)

The obligation to do good was argued to be the source of happiness by earliest philosophers. If not the first and strongest inclination, goodness is a primal inclination.

Freud, however, looked at conscience from a different perspective. “The first renunciation of instinctual gratification”, Freud stated in 1924, “is enforced by external powers, and it is this that creates morality which expresses itself in conscience and exacts a further renunciation of instinct” (as cited in Buber, 1973, p. 225). Clearly other “instinctual” motives exist, competing with each other and engaging different primal

emotions. The reflexive emotion of gratitude, as much as guilt, is a response to conscience.

An interest in goodness has surfaced in research. In the field of neuroscience and evolutionary biology an attempt has been undertaken to establish a biological basis to the goodness impulse. Using the analogy of a computer, Tucker (2009), in his article entitled *Reinventing Morality*, proposed that the universal goodness impulse (conscience) is part of our hardware, but that aspects of the decision-making process are fluid and unique to the individual, like software.

Just as learning a language means learning not only words, but also a system for putting the words together, the same is true for morality; there are very specific “commandments” that are unique to every culture, but there are also softer usage guidelines. (p. 22)

Reviewing a study on the region of the brain responsible for generating emotions, Flores (2007) wrote,

The findings show that our natural aversion to harming others emerges from two previously documented systems in the brain — one emotional and one rational. The emotional system pinpointed in this study triggers a fast, reflexive response; it provides a shortcut to what is right in situations requiring immediate action. The rational side aids us when deliberation and calculation are advantageous. Scientists do not yet understand how the two systems interact or how one supersedes the other when they dictate contradictory courses of action. (p. 9)

Although the goodness impulse is arguably primal, it competes with other equally primal but less altruistic impulses. On the CBC show *The Current* (aired March 24,

2009) Dan Ariely, a behavioural economist, discussed his work on cheating and honesty. He suggested that we have two goals: one is to act in a socially appropriate manner, in order to feel good about ourselves, and the other to cheat and benefit ourselves, while still feeling good about ourselves. Caring to be good still demanded attention and had to be negotiated into the equation. He also reported that when participants were reminded of the Ten Commandments before an opportunity to cheat, cheating was eliminated completely (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009; Mead, Baumeister, Gino, Schweitzer, & Ariely, 2009). These findings support the effectiveness of normation against cheating even when the participants did not self-identify as religious.

It should be evident that goodness is not tied to a religious orientation, but as with the function of conscience, it is innate. Tucker (2009) referenced research that found “people who don’t adhere to a specific religion and people who do are remarkably similar in the way they make moral decisions” (p. 22).

We all process moral decisions based on different assumptions or beliefs, but the process happens in the same place for each of us, an area in the front of the brain called the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. This is where our emotional experiences — religious, traumatic, joyous — connect with our higher-level social decision making to give us a sense of good or bad. (Tucker, 2009, p. 23)

Zohar and Marshall (2000) in their research examined the notion of a “God Spot.” They defined the ‘God spot’ as “an isolated module of neural networks in the temporal lobes. Like other isolated modules in the brain – our speech centre, our rhythm centre and so on – it confers a special ability, but it has to be integrated” (p. 112). They highlighted research where the research team discerned two types of spiritual experience,

the 'mystical' and the 'numinous.' Mystical experiences were described as: feelings of profound meaning, deep insight, a sense of great well-being, euphoria, or an over-arching sense of unity in all things. The numinous experience was "a sense of a guiding supernatural presence... calling out to them and advising them to follow some particular path in life." The authors suggested "both types are a familiar accompaniment to increased temporal lobe or 'God Spot' activity in the brain" (p. 101).

Green's (1999) treatise shares the assumption that moral education (conscience) implies an intent for goodness. He cautioned, however, "forging good people and good lives, is simply what utopias are about, though utopia cannot be what any useful view of moral education is about" (p. 11).

### **Normation**

For Green (1999), conscience is formed by the acquisition of social norms. "Being naturalized to the normative community, that is, putting on its standards as one's 'second nature', is what normation in the strong sense is about" (p. 56). "Normation", for Green (1999), however, is not the equivalent to socialization. Socialization, "a dumb acquiescence in custom" does not imply strong normation (p. 32). Normation is the acquisition of "social norms" that govern behaviour; norms specific to practices and institutions. For this reason,

Conscience is never formed at all except in the context of some public and for the sake of life within that public... the proper unit of consideration in the conduct of moral education is not the individual, not even the individual conscience. Rather, it is the member. (Green, 1985, p. 8)

Membership is inherently a normation term. “It is in our lives as public agents that we are most directly compelled to face the ambiguities, the depths, the uncertainties of moral life” (Green, 1999, p. 74).

Green’s (1999) concept of normation shares some similarities to “habituation” as understood by Aristotle. Power, et al. (1989) offer an examination of Aristotle’s view of habituation and described it “as an educational process involving reason, the emotions, and community” (p. 132). Green’s (1999) normation also resembles Macquarrie’s (1970) “inculcation of particular codes”; a level of conscience that is “formed by actual codes that bear all the marks of a particular historical and social context. These codes, moreover, are taught by parents, teachers, clergy, and others, who stamp them with still further idiosyncrasies of emphasis and interpretation” (p. 113).

The argument that conscience is “for the sake of life within that public” is also reflected in the writings of Cousins (1973),

At the very moment when autonomous subjectivity is touched, the moral self is most universalized. At the one realizes that an absolute moral demand touches his deepest subjectivity, he becomes aware that this demand is capable of being universalized to all subjectivities....it becomes most social and universal. (p. 146)

Green (1999) too focuses on the “caring” to universalize norms. The critical attitude that Green argued is essential for an active conscience encompasses a kind of caring, “a caring to be correct” (p. 39). He wrote, “*the rule cannot have the status of a rule of rectitude for me unless for me it has the status of a rule of rectitude for others*” (p. 38)

Paul Tillich (1973) implies normation when he wrote about “internal imposition.”

Systems of ethical rules, that is moralisms, are imposed on the masses by authorities, religious authorities as the Roman Church, quasi-religious authorities as the totalitarian governments, secular authorities as the givers of positive laws, conventional, family and school authorities. 'Imposing' in a radical sense means forming a conscience. External imposition is not sufficient for the creation of a moral system. It must be internalized. Only a system which is internalized is safe. Only commands which have become natural will be obeyed in extreme situations. (pp. 65-66)

Evidence of this can be found in an empirical study investigating the extent of possible Catholic guilt among U.S. adolescents. Vaisley and Smith (2008) found that there is no evidence that Catholic teens feel guiltier than other teens, or that guilt inducing behaviour affects Catholics more strongly than other teens. Assuming the Catholic teens had learned what behaviours their religion deemed wrong, they still did not "feel" the expected guilt. These results suggest that internalization may not have occurred, and their moral system was not created as the Catholic teaching intended. When the judgment/action gap has not been bridged, then, conscience is not evident.

Green (1999) cautioned that even with regularity of behaviour, we cannot infer the presence (or absence) of any definite social norm. He argued that compliance, obedience, and observance are insufficient to confirm the acquisition of a social norm. It is when a person "corrects" his or her own behaviour, or that of another, in the face of error or irregularity, "then something in addition to mere compliance or obedience is going on" (p. 37).

Offered as a concerning sign of the times, Green (1999) observed, “there is an emerging radical separation between the public and private spheres of life and a kind of privatization of morality that can have enormous and quite frightening consequences” (p. 78). “Where there is strong normation, there is moral authority. Where there is not, then at best, there can exist only a kind of technical, instrumental, or economic authority of norms” (p. 79). Green suggested, “A familiar description of the modern world is that strong social norms have become fewer and weak ones more numerous” (p. 52).

### **Formation and the Developed/Mature Conscience**

“Conscience is the root of all true courage; if a man would be brave let him obey his conscience.” (Attributed to James Freeman)

The capacity for conscience is evident even in childhood. Its formation is influenced by cognitive/affective development as well as the environment. Sears, Macoby, and Levin (1973), wrote about the “inner control” that even a child can exhibit that “carries its own punishment from within the child himself, going counter to his self-instruction that makes him feel guilty, ashamed, or self-derogating” (p. 293). Forman, Aksan, and Kochanska (2004), citing the work of Emde, suggested that children, by the age of 3, have already developed a moral self.

Emde made three claims about moral development. First, procedures in accord with moral norms (or dos and don’ts) are learned long before children themselves can articulate moral principles. Second, this early learning is relatively positive and nonconflictual. Third, it draws on universal motives for connectedness and for effective action in the environment. (p. 700)



In their own study on early imitation and prediction of conscience, Forman et al. found a clear link between toddler-age readiness to imitate and preschool-age conscience. They concurred with “the basic insight of our ‘ancients’ ... that children’s imitation has consequences for moral development” (p. 703).

Glaser (1973) also commented on a child’s development of conscience and the process of internalization that is taking place even when a child is young. He argued the motivation behind the guilt is fear of isolation. Nell Noddings (2008), however, questioned the exclusive focus on fear. She wrote, “If we give due weight to early childhood, we see their conscience (a sense of right and wrong, not mere internalization of authority) develops as much out of love and attachment as out of fear” (p. 231). Further, the primary fear is not of harm and punishment but rather of disappointing a loved parent and, at worst, losing that parent’s love” (p. 231). According to Noddings, love, caring, and relation, play central roles in both ethics and moral education. Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, wrote, “Although the potential for such virtuous being is present at birth, that potential must be nurtured if it is to be actualized...” (Johnson & Reed, 2008, p. 35).

There is, however, no recognized developmental theory of conscience formation. Kohlberg’s (1972) theory of cognitive moral development, with “culturally universal” stages, comes closest. Kohlberg (1972), recognizing the problem of “relativity of values” in moral education, offered his own solution. He believed that generating “a philosophy of moral education” rather than the direct teaching of fixed moral rules, would stimulate moral development. Kohlberg’s landmark work faced much praise and criticism notably in Carol Gilligan’s 1982 book, *In a Different Voice*. She challenged Kohlberg’s

exclusive focus on moral rationality and the absence of affective factors. “Gilligan described a morality based on the recognition of needs, relations, and response” (Noddings, 2008, p. 227). The existence of the stages, their nature and hierarchy have all been challenged. Frimer and Walker (2008) noted “the field has since largely moved past this core premise that vaulted moral thought upon a pedestal” (pp. 333-334).

Dwight Boyd (1989) wrote, “the notion of ‘development’ carries with it not only the notion of change but also the idea of change with regard to some specific dimension *and* some specific direction considered” (p. 96). For Green (1999), however, there is no proposed developmental sequence or direction, as in Kohlberg’s (1984) theory of cognitive moral development. “A developed (mature) conscience must be one in which competing voices (quarrelling voices) continue and are even cultivated, deepened, and elaborated” (p. 29). There is no developmental sequence, but voices “side by side.” The development, or interaction, of voices makes them “more incisive, more rational, more passionate, more perceptive, more discerning, more expansive in their scope” (p. 61).

In response to Kohlberg’s (1972) work, Green (1985) argued on three points: (a) “moral judgment is only a part of what the philosophy of moral education must include”; (b) Kohlberg “...borrows from a neo-Kantian, or ‘right reasons’ approach”; and (c) “The elements of an adequate moral philosophy may not include all that is needed in an adequate philosophy of moral education” (p. 26). In conclusion, he wrote, “In short, the rejection of a stage theory of moral education arises partly from a concern for the formation of conscience rather than the more narrow matter of moral judgment” (p. 26). It is interesting, however, that Kohlberg himself in the 1970s, as previously noted, argued for a “philosophy of moral education” as did Green in his 1999 treatise. As well,

conscience plays a significant role in Kohlberg's final stage, while still emphasizing principles that are logical, comprehensive, and universal.

Greek philosophers presumed an educated person exhibited maturity and virtuous behaviour. Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, wrote, "an educated person unites morality and reason in virtuous action .... In addition to achieving human happiness, such individuals become ideal citizens ready and able to perform their duties as rational members of a community" (as cited in Johnson & Reed, 2008, p. 35).

What might a mature conscience look like? Certainly there are differing opinions. Referring to Freud's work, Pattison (1973) suggested that, "The capacity to pursue moral behavior in adulthood optimally occurs when there is a synchronous alignment between ... superego, ego ideal, narcissistic self, and autonomous ego values (p. 244). Mature commitments are influenced by social matrix, and mature moral decisions are interdependent on the judgments and evaluations of peers (p. 247).

For Cousins (1973), "The first quality of the mature conscience is a sense of ambiguity and limitation" (p. 150). Tillich (1973) argued that any development of conscience requires the "perfection of our reason" (p. 51). Rudin (1973) distinguished an "existential conscience" from a "conventional conscience", reasoning that maturity goes beyond the conventional framework. "People who are burdened with problems, who are less integrated, are more intensely aware of the divergent possibilities, the dissonances, the polarities of their being and for this reason must make conscious decisions more frequently" (p. 105).

A mature conscience, some suggest, does not imply the "happiness" that foundational philosophers presumed. The existential conscience of Rudin (1973), and its

heightened sensitivity, can become a “burden” at times. Glaser (1973) also recognized this. He wrote,

Conscience is precisely the call of genuine value which can well call one to an extremely isolated position. Motivating an individual’s activity on the basis of ‘acceptance’ serves well the socialization and normalization of individuals to prevailing norms; but as a basis of Christian morality (in the mature sense of the word), which should be characterized by a creative thrust into the future, i.e., into the not-yet-ready-to-be-thought, its dynamics are strikingly inadequate. (p. 173)

For Tillich (1973) “True morality is a morality of risk. It is a morality which is based in the ‘courage to be’, the dynamic self-affirmation of man as man....Moralisms give safety, morality lives in the unsafety of risk and courage.” (p. 67). Macquarrie (1970), commented that this risk to be is “not merely a disclosure; it is also ... a call or summons” [where] the fundamental command of conscience is to *be* (pp. 114-115).

Spiritual Intelligence, as proposed by Zohar and Marshall (2000), also carries with it a mark of a mature conscience. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) is “the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value” (p. 3), “it is our guide at the edge”, “our conscience” (p. 13-14). “It allows human beings to be creative, to change rules and to alter situations” (p. 5). This understanding of spiritual intelligence resembles Green’s (1999) voice of imagination, and it is the voice of imagination that Green suggested is the hardest voice to develop.

A mature conscience is typically associated with wisdom. Again, Dewey (1976) offered an important insight. He wrote, “wisdom is not merely to apply a standard but to form one” (p. 119), also pointing to Green’s (1999) voice of imagination.

A mature conscience does not dwell at the level of “ordinary morality.”

Macquarrie (1970), citing Friedrich Nietzsche, wrote,

ordinary morality derives its power from three factors: ‘the instinct of the *herd*, opposed to the strong and the independent; the instinct of all *sufferers and abortions*, opposed to the happy and well-constituted; the instinct of the *mediocre*, opposed to the exceptions. (pp. 115-116)

Tillich (1973b) also saw maturity being beyond what most of us want. Safety, security, and stability, lower order needs in Maslow’s (1972) hierarchy, are in conflict with the courage and risk necessary to seeking full potential and self-actualization. And it is self-actualization that the exemplars of a mature conscience display.

The empirical fact is that self-actualizing people, our best experiencers, are also our most compassionate, our great improvers and reformers of society, our most *effective* fighters against injustice, inequality... cruelty, exploitation, and also our best fighters *for* excellence, effectiveness, competence. (Maslow, 1972, p. xii)

### **“Things that Matter”: The Sacred**

Green (1999) argued that moral education should not be about right belief, right behaviour, or induction into some ideology or religious faith. Likewise, he did not support the argument reduced to a “vacuous claim” that moral education is simply the formation of values. In his approach, Green (1999) kept a comfortable distance from formal religions. However, he opened a more interior door, a door to the sacred and the topic of spirituality.

Green’s (1999) thesis proposed that the sacred is “a prerequisite for the conduct of moral education even to begin.... *in a world where nothing is sacred, moral education is*

*impossible*” (p. 112). It is only that which is sacred that can engage the conscience. For Green (1999) this is not a “religious claim” but only an indication of a boundary, or barrier, where “we stand on one side of the line and look across to the other side with a sense of awe and whispered respect” (p. 113).

Green (1999) defined the sacred as something “provoking awe or reverence or stirring a sense of mystery” (p. 113). It was not Green’s aim to say what things are sacred and what things are not. “Almost anything can be and at some time or other probably has been regarded as sacred” (p. 112). Green, however, did recognize that “in finding ourselves in the presence of the sacred somewhere, we give a religious-like response. Wherever we find the sacred is where our religion is found” (p. 115).

Maslow (1972) also spoke of the sacred. In a reissue of *Religion, Values and Peak Experiences*, he wrote in the preface, “The sacred is in the ordinary...found in one’s daily life, in one’s neighbors, friends, in one’s backyard...” (p. x).

Although Green (1999) did not attempt to suggest where the sacred is found, he did suggest when the sacred is present, it is the possibility of moral horror that signals the presence of the sacred. Vocabulary, like desecration and violation, he argued, also alerts us that we are in the presence of the sacred. Evil, for Green (1999), is the breaching of the boundaries separating what is permitted from what is not. Evil is one face of the two sided coin, called conscience. However, “the absence of the sacred is ... the banal, the ordinary, the mundane” (p.114). Without the sacred, at best, there is only weak normation and the absence of moral authority.

But did Green (1999) escape the goodness debate? I see where Kantian (1963) thinking is compatible with Green’s treatise with regards to the end or goal of conscience.

Kant argued that the supreme principle of morality is good will. Quoting Kant, Lehmann (1963) wrote, “nothing in the world – indeed nothing even beyond the world – can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification, except a *good will*” (p. 175). Good will, good intention, “caring to be correct”, becomes the goal of conscience formation, not good beliefs or good behaviour. Ryerson (1871) recognized this when he wrote, “moral quality of human actions consists in the *intention*. A good intention is necessary to a good action; a bad intention is necessary to a bad action. It is the *intention* which determines the moral character of actions” (p. 51).

As noted earlier with regards to moral maturity, accessing the sacred may not be “comfortable.” Tacey (2004) believed there is a human fear of the sacred. Citing Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy*, Tacey wrote,

Otto declares that spirituality is paradoxical and double-sided. On the one hand we are ‘fascinated’ by its mystery; and on the other hand we live in ‘dread’ and may even be ‘appalled’ at the reality of the sacred. The darker, more foreboding aspect he called the *mysterium tremendum*, that is an awesome awareness of a sacredness that overrides and envelopes our lives, an overriding aspect that can be associated with death and the fear of dying. (p. 117)

“Things that matter” point to the sacred. In this case, pointing is enough. Defining sacred, however, is plagued with land mines, and typically falls prey to predetermined theological concepts. Words that attempt to describe the experience include: transcendent reality, the ultimate, the numinous, and the mystical, but these words, of course, each mean a different thing. Interpretation of the words risks moving us farther from the primal experience of connectedness and union, and it is only the

experience, not its interpretation, that is at the core. All religions offer an interpretation of the primal experience and somewhere in their doctrines is the essence of the universal truths that the experience offers.

In characterizing conscience as a reflexive judgment not defined within a moral theology, I suspect Green's (1999) thesis would not be acceptable within Roman Catholicism, as Kohlberg's (1984) cognitive theory of moral development was so judged (Anosiki, 2000). As well, Green (1999) exposed himself to accusations of relativism. In defence, Alexander (2000), in her review of Green's book wrote,

The quagmire of radical relativism can be avoided, however, by recognizing that all moral norms attempt to operationalise a sense of the sacred that emanates from beyond its own parochial ties, even if we can say very little about what a transcendent dimension of the sacred consists in. (p. 399)

It is the assumption of ... a transcendent source of the sacred, even where there is disagreement or lack of clarity about what it consists in, that enables a variety of ethical traditions to coexist within a single society; for it can be asserted by each that the others' senses of the sacred have a common transcendent referent expressed in different symbols, metaphors and stories. This forms the basis for tolerance among competing conceptions of the good. (p. 399)

In summary, there are four foundational points that can be made here which frame this thesis with regards to the sacred:

1. Everyone has an innate need to bring meaning to their life. In doing so, they accept, adapt, or formulate a belief-system.



2. Even an atheist, a Stoic, or a nonbeliever establishes a belief-system of meanings, the essence of which is “things that matter.”
3. When something becomes important to the individual, it speaks to their connectedness to the whole, the mystery, the unknown, that is more than, or beyond, the individual.
4. The experience of reverence, accountability, and responsibility for the whole takes on moral and ethical overtones, compelling people to virtuous behaviours.

Advancing moral education means addressing the formation of conscience. In doing so, the sacred must be attended to or the “the banal, the ordinary, the mundane” sets in and moral motivation is absent.

### **Implications for Education**

The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's  
conscience. (Harper Lee)

In our emerging global village, the search for universal virtues of citizenship, and, ultimately, the governing of behaviour, has driven character and moral educational efforts. For Green (1999) “moral education is education in observing and elaborating the voices of conscience, and that normation is the process by which that aim is accomplished” (p. 45).

Moral education, among other things, is education in strong normation. It is the education of a conscience cultivated by attachment, not merely presence, to a social group. It is, in other words, the education of the conscience of membership.

Green (1999) pondered what kind of curriculum would engender and strengthen a conscience of membership. He proposed a curriculum of moral skill;

the skills needed to be competent in public life. Thus, the curriculum of moral skills takes as its subject questions of decision and choice having to do with some collective- the school, the neighbourhood, the town, the profession, the family, or whatever. They have to do with questions not about what is good for *me* to do, but what is good for *us* to do. (p.80)

As a challenge to school officials everywhere, he argued that such an education succeeds only when the moral language in a school has changed from the first-person singular ("I" and "me") to the first-person plural ("we" and "us"). He identified three lessons: (a) to be prepared to go beyond judgment and offering some proposal for improvement, (b) to employ empathy, and (c) to make useful judgments about the weight to be attached to different interests.

Parker Palmer (1983) talked about the spirituality of education proposing "the practice of relatedness" where there is mutuality and accountability that take place in community by knowing the transcendent center that connects all" (p. 11). "When education divorces self and world from their transcendent source, they become locked in an endless power struggle to create each other in their own image" (p. 12). "The community is a check against personal distortions" (p. 18).

Yet, how do we in Western society, acknowledge the sacred within moral education practices? Tacey (2004) found that the students took care of this. He wrote, "the problem we face is largely one of terminology and prejudice. For many academics

the term ‘spiritual’ connotes otherworldly matters and esotericism. But students are very often not referring to otherworldly matters when they speak of spirituality” (p. 65).

If we care to listen to what youth are saying, they are indicating that their spirituality is *engaged* spirituality, concerned with the welfare of the world and the sacredness of endangered nature. They see spirituality as the basis for a new or renewed sense of human responsibility and social justice. It is worldly and pragmatic. (p. 66)

Tacey argued that we have to revise our sense of what *internal* means. It can no longer refer to what is private and tucked away, but interiority should refer to a “depth or resonance in all parts of reality.” Spirituality is not just about one’s subjectivity, but about “the deep subjectivity of all things and the world” (p. 67).

Zohar and Marshall (2000) understood spiritual education much the same way as does Tacey (2004). They found that for their students, spirituality had “nothing to do with belief or religion, these young people describe themselves as having a spiritual problem because they wonder how to lead meaningful lives” (p. 20).

Huitt (2004) examined education for moral and character education in the United States. He identified various alternatives including: (a) ignoring it, (b) a values neutral stance, (c) an analysis view, and (d) a cognitively-oriented approach. Huitt concluded that a

combination of approaches is much more likely to impact the two important aspects of character not included in values education - volition and action.... This multi-faceted view of character development is more similar to ...social cognition theory with its emphasis on reciprocal determinism than it is to a behavioral,

cognitive, or humanistic view, each of which is more likely to focus on one component to the detriment of the others. (p. 4)

Green's (1999) main supposition was that self-governance ought to lie at the heart of a moral education. "Each of us has the capacity to judge our own conduct and even to stand in judgement on what we discern to be the composition of our own affections" (p. 3). This paradox will be a challenge to educational organizations which seek to establish governance from within their rules and regulations, and not from within the individual.

### Summary

Conscience is a man's compass. (Vincent van Gogh)

It might be said by some that conscience has an image problem. Lehmann (1963) argued that the "tortuous record" of the decline and fall of conscience forces upon us a sharp alternative: "either do the conscience over or do the conscience in" (p. 327). "Ethical theory must either dispose of the conscience altogether or completely transform the interpretation of its ethical nature, function, and significance" (p. 327). The enduring and persistent nature of conscience invites the researcher to "do the conscience over." Green (1999) has made such an attempt. Doing the conscience over, in this way, validates the Greek roots of *synderesis*, with its focus on standards and reflexive judgment, and the cognitive/affective union. In presenting a philosophy of moral education, and not a moral philosophy, Green's (1999) treatise on the educational formation of conscience, established the "nature, function and significance" of conscience that can advance a revision of the vocabulary for thinking about moral education.

In summary, there exists a *moral hard drive* within us, a will for goodness, which speaks to us through our conscience. It is an inseparable cognitive/affective union

between self-judgement and action, reason and emotion. At the core of our moral experience, primal emotions (fear, hope, wonder, and joy) are engaged, and through reflexive judgment and critical attitude, reflexive emotions (greed, shame, guilt, embarrassment, pride, gratitude, horror) emerge that point to voices of conscience. In our very practical and everyday lives conscience speaks in various ways: (a) as standards of excellence in the practice of any craft, (b) in our attachments, (c) in our actions that exceed duty or obligation, (d) in our ancestral memories, and (e) in our prophetic imagination. At the heart of all voices are “things that matter”- the sacred. A developing conscience compels reflexive judgment towards the deepening, elaborating, and cultivating of quarrelling voices. In conscience formation, utopias are open for examination, and not an end in themselves. *“No tradition is without its critical resources, and no rational criticism is without its tradition”* (Green, 1999, p. 44).

Green’s (1999) treatise has received critical praise but, to my knowledge, has not proceeded to empirical research. We are left with questions about the current awareness of conscience operating in our lives; (a) questions about the voices of conscience, their development, strength and flexibility, and (b) questions about the sacred and its association with spirituality. The research proposal for which this literature review has been compiled will attempt to examine these questions.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RELATED PROCEDURES**

This is a qualitative study using Green's (1999) treatise as its framework, specifically to establish the research objectives and determine operational definitions (Appendix A). As such, it reflects a grounded theory design with *conscience formation* as the common process studied. Data from the participants have been evaluated for the extent of its portrayal of Green's treatise (Cresswell, 2008). A grounded theory approach works well for my research as it intentionally examines an emerging theory at its infancy stage and allows for empirical data to speak to the theory and even to modify it.

#### **Theoretical Background**

In order to study conscience formation, Green's (1999) thesis would have us look at normation, that is, the acquisition of social norms that govern. Social norms "are paradigmatically rules of 'ought' and 'should'" (p. 32). "Being naturalized to the normative community, that is, putting on its standards as one's 'second nature', is what normation in the strong sense is about" (p. 56). However, he noted that merely from regularity of behaviour, we cannot infer the presence (or absence) of any definite social norm. Green argued that compliance, obedience, and observance are insufficient to confirm the acquisition of a social norm. It is when a person "corrects" his or her own behaviour, or that of another, in the face of error or irregularity, "then something in addition to mere compliance or obedience is going on" (p. 37).

For Green (1999), the step of "correction" requires the adoption of a certain critical attitude toward departures from the rule. Therefore, the acquisition of critical standards for judgment is one feature, or criteria, for examining conscience formation. Another criteria, for Green, is a "caring to be correct." "The attitude that rectitude

matters, is a necessary condition for the acquisition of the norm to occur, which is to say, for the very existence of the norm *as a norm*" (p. 41).

we know that a norm has been acquired if, confronting violations of it or even anticipating one's own violation of it provokes some degree of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and the like in one's self and provokes disapproval, anger, censure, moral rejection, or even abhorrence on the part of others. (p. 41)

A third criterion is the evidence of "reflexive emotions." Normation is the restructuring of the emotions of self-assessment. These are typically the feelings of guilt, shame, anxiety, embarrassment, and sometimes fear, sorrow, and pain. "The relation of these emotions to norm acquisition is just as essential as the presence of critical attitude and the 'caring to be correct'" (Green, 1999, p. 41).

From a methodological perspective, therefore, it would be more revealing to seek participants who have demonstrated, through their behaviour, "strong" normation. That is, to identify a research environment where there is evidence of strong normation through the exhibiting of critical attitude, rectitude, and reflexive emotions. Even when confident that a given community is engaged in normation, I need to be confident that I am not just witnessing obedience or compliance. Green's (1999) thesis offers a strategy for this, which is to identify those who "self-correct." In doing so, my sampling strategy is that of "concept sampling", a purposeful sampling strategy that seeks to examine a specific concept (acts of conscience) within the theory of conscience formation (Creswell, 2008).

### **Participant Demographics**

I identified the age bracket of *youth* (ages 16-21) as my target group. At this age, a person is very attuned to, even seduced by, the social norms of their various communities, especially that of their peers (Fowler, 1995, Stages 3 & 4, Faith Development). It is an age where the motivation and pressure to “comply” is known to be strong. It is also the age where the cognitive capacity is emerging to examine those norms in relation to personal goals and expectations (Piaget, 1932). Identity formation is a primary developmental task for the youth/young adult (Erickson, 1963). I had hoped that an invitation to attend to their conscience formation, through Focus Groups and individual interviews, would appeal to potential participants.

### **A Normative Community**

Green (1999) suggested that there is a reduction in communities where strong normation is evident. “Nevertheless even in such a world, there remain certain relations - most clearly those of friendship and some forms of religious, political, and familial association - to which strong normation seems not merely propitious but essential” (p. 52). One community, therefore, that remains a likely context for normation is a faith community. There is, however, no assurance that normation has been strong, only that the opportunity for normation has been present. Targeting youth within a faith community would increase the possibility of examining strong normation especially through the voices of membership and memory. The participants will also exhibit the acquisition of norms from other venues of membership common to their age, increasing the potential for other voices such as that of craft or sacrifice. Even Green’s *voice of imagination* could be more evident among visionary youth holding high ideals. David



Tacey (2004), an Associate Professor in Psychoanalytic Studies, in his teaching of a university course on spirituality discovered,

Youth spirituality is more interested in listening to the inward conscience than obeying the external dictates of religious authority. Young people seem to believe that conscience, not an outside authority or tradition, is the true moral guide. This reliance on conscience is a product of modernity and the democratic principles inherent in contemporary society. (p. 80)

In my previous work with the Anglican Church of Canada, I was responsible for the support of youth ministry for approximately 100 parishes in Southern Ontario. I also facilitated the implementation of a number of diocesan wide youth programs, from 1-day workshops to 5-day residential events. Although each parish had its own “flavour” of Anglicanism, youth gathered at these diocesan events with some degree of awareness that they were members of a bigger community. In addition to experiencing normation within a faith community, these youth live lives where conduct is also determined by their identity as young people at the turn of the century, on the threshold of launching career paths, and of entering committed relationships.

### **Procedures**

The research was conducted over three phases. During *Phase One* gatekeepers were approached who could act as the recruiters of potential participants. From returned *Letters of Interest*, participants were then selected for both Phases Two and Three. Four individuals were selected for *Phase Two*, One-to-One Interviews. *Phase Three* was the conducting of a single Focus Group. There were two adaptations made from the original plan as intended in the Thesis Proposal. I initially hoped to create a sufficient pool of

participant names to conduct three or four Focus Groups, each one addressing a common “issue of concern.” However, due to a low response rate and the extended length of time needed to circulate additional packages, the decision was made to proceed with just one Focus Group and arrange others only if there was adequate interest. The second change came when the attempt to arrange the Focus Group proved too challenging, with at least three scheduled dates cancelled due to conflicting commitments by various participants. It was suggested by a participant that I proceed with the One-to-One Interviews, leaving the Focus Group to the end. This is, in fact, what I did do, thereby reversing the order, so that the intended Phase Two now became Phase Three, and Three became Two. More will be said later about the implications of this change.

#### *Phase One: Approaching the Community*

Although there has been a gap of 15 years since my formal activity within the diocese, my legacy still precedes me and grants me access to the diocesan community. As well, I continue to be an active member at a parish level. Therefore, I am an “insider” as well as a “researcher.” This did not mean that I conducted my research with youth with whom I had a working relationship. All of the young people whom I served are now adults. But I did still have a number of contacts that could form the foundation of a research support network. To assist in establishing this network and develop a working knowledge of the system as it currently functions, I completed an Educational Internship in the Fall of 2008. I participated in a number of diocesan educational events where I could observe the diocesan structure, do some networking, and make some preliminary observations of *conscience formation*. In order to achieve this, I first had to consult the

Bishop for this Southern Ontario diocese, to seek his approval and to request names for potential supervisors. It was through this Internship that a recruitment process emerged.

To start, my proposal was presented to a monthly gathering of local priests representing approximately 15 parishes in the region. Time was allowed for a presentation of the research, and the practical steps for which their assistance as gatekeepers was needed. Each priest was encouraged to think of specific youth in their parishes who demonstrated a commitment to their faith and their Church through participation, in any form, in their parish and/or in the diocese. Specifically, they would be youth in whom their priest believes they have observed an act of conscience. The recruitment packages I distributed explained the project, invited the young person to participate, and included a *Letter of Interest* to be returned. As gatekeepers, the clergy were provided with a proposed script for this initial conversation. If the potential participant chose to complete the *Letter of Interest*, the letters were to be returned directly to me, without identifying themselves to their priest, unless done on their own initiative. To ensure anonymity at the recruitment stage, the clergy were advised that after the initial approach, they should not make any further enquiries with the young person regarding his/her participation, unless the potential participant initiates the conversation. The youth also were advised of these measures, and of the intention to protect them from any feelings of obligation or coercion.

Following this initial presentation, due to a low response, the catchment area was broadened and additional priests were approached on a one-to-one basis to assist with recruitment. In total, approximately 50 recruitment packages were directly distributed by me. Follow-up was required as the youth needed personal contact before confirming

interest, or declining the invitation. It was from this pool of individuals that the final participants were selected.

Selection commenced with a few guiding criteria. Assessment of these criteria was built into the *Letter of Interest* and included in the Recruitment Package. First, the participant self-identified as having acted on their conscience in a specific context or event. Secondly, for practical reasons, youth were selected based on locale, so that the Focus Group was drawn from a manageable pocket of the region. Again, due to limited numbers of potential participants, achieving balance in representation for gender or age was not possible. As the researcher, I made the final approach to participants, confirming their interest and making arrangement for Phase Two.

#### *Phase Two: One-to-One Interviews*

The purpose in holding interviews was to allow for more in-depth questions than possible with the Focus Group. The original intent to hold Focus Groups first was to further refine the selection of participants who would go on to the One-to-One Interviews. The criteria were to be those who demonstrated a critical attitude, a caring to be correct, and reflexive emotions, as identified by Green (1999). By reversing the phases, I was relinquishing the power to select participants for One-to-One Interviews and moving selection criteria to the self-identification process built into recruitment. In retrospect, the richness of the data was not diminished. Those participants who hung in, in spite of multiple cancelled dates, and yet still committed to One-to-One Interviews, clearly had an interest in the topic and a story to tell. The four interviews were held in various locations to respect the anonymity of participants from the larger diocesan

community. Interviews were approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours in duration and audio taped (Appendix B).

### *Phase Three: Focus Group*

The purpose of the Focus Group was to facilitate a general conversation on the topic of conscience, specifically on issues that mattered to the participants. As in the One-to-One Interviews, I wanted to invite participants to think and talk about the theory of conscience through their own experiences. However, the process design for the Focus Group, and the questions, were different from that of the One-to-One Interviews.

Although the themes, set by the research objectives, were the same, the order in which they were explored is different. As part of the introductions, each participant in the Focus Group shared a personal story of an *act of conscience*. In a brief narrative, they described the circumstances, the action taken, and any consequences. Following this opening exercise, participants were invited to identify what motivations they heard in each other's narratives. Discussion questions encouraged active listening and the exploration of the topic of conscience and its formation.

In the end, only one Focus Group was arranged. It was held 4 months after the One-to-One Interviews were initiated. Five young adults participated, none of whom had participated in the One-to-One Interviews. All participants, however, self-identified as having interest in the topic of conscience and a story to tell. The Focus Group was held at a time and location that respected the anonymity of participants within the larger diocesan community. The Focus Group session was approximately 2 hours and was videotaped, and audio taped (Appendix C).

### **Data Collection**

For purposes of this study, “triangulation”, that is, multiple sources of data and data collection were used. The Focus Group session was videotaped, and the One-to-One Interviews were audio taped. These were the primary sources of data. As a secondary source, rough notes were kept to use as prompts for further questioning and to record nonverbal behaviour during both the Focus Group and individual interviews. The returned *Letters of Interest* contained demographic information--yet another source of secondary data.

Both the Focus Group session and interviews followed a semi-structured process in which the session outline followed the research objectives using similar, but not identical, questions. There was variation with follow-up clarification questions that further explored the general themes, and encouraged depth where warranted.

Unique to the Focus Group session, however, was that the questions served to promote dialogue among participants. The intent was to encourage, through conversation, a broad and creative exploration of the topic. By design, therefore, an interactive environment was created where data emerged that were not available through One-to-One Interviews. This, too, created a forum for learning, where the topic of study was, in fact, advanced in this group setting. Data informing all research objectives were more organic, and evolved with the various phases. Therefore, both I, as the researcher, and the participants experienced the opportunity to acquire an understanding of conscience formation. The data analysis attempted to take into account this evolution.

For the individual interviews I used significantly more predetermined and follow-up questions than used in the Focus Group. These questions assisted in achieving greater

detail and further insight specific to the participants and to the research objectives.

Although questions were predetermined keeping in mind Green's (1999) treatise, there was an attempt to adapt to what the participants brought as their own language. As the language of *conscience* is not necessarily evident in common dialogue and typically is associated with morality, the opening questions invited the participant to use his/her own terms, such as, values, morals, beliefs, principles, and feelings. The questions that followed attempted to respect the language of the participant.

As the researcher, I had an active role that required engagement with the participants. Due to the design of both the Focus Group session and individual interviews, this meant a fluid back-and-forth interaction, responding to verbal and nonverbal behaviour. This is something of which I, as the researcher, needed to maintain a critical awareness and critical reflection of, including reflecting on my own beliefs, values, and biases and how they impacted the study design, implementation, and interpretation of data.

### **Data Analysis**

Audio tapes from the individual interviews were transcribed. Transcripts were emailed to participants for review and correction (member check). Both the audio and video tapes were used for transcribing the Focus Group session. Transcripts of sessions were forwarded to my field supervisor to facilitate conversation regarding accuracy of analysis and interpretation.

NVivo8 was utilized to contribute to text analysis. With this tool, coding was achieved through establishing "nodes" (categories) which, when grouped, provided data for the research objectives, these in addition to the themes that emerged on their own

account. The value of this grounded theory approach is that the exact words of the participants are what defined the themes, not the imposed language of Green's (1999) treatise. This was particularly challenging in my thesis. By using Green's treatise to form the research objectives and his words to form operational definitions, there was a risk that as a researcher, I might lead the participants into using the same language. For the Focus Group, some attempt was made to reduce this risk by minimizing the number of facilitating questions, by forming questions with more "common" language, and by encouraging free flow dialogue between participants. For the One-to-One Interviews, at the outset, participants were invited to identify their own preferred terminology which I then incorporated into the questions. Nevertheless, the overall approach supported a more systematic design with some preconceived categories and frameworks. This was done so as to visualize the interrelationship of themes specific to the objectives, and, therefore, specific to Green's (1999) theory of conscience formation (Creswell, 2008). Both the Focus Group and One-to-One Interviews contributed to the theory building approach.

### **Ethical Considerations**

An application for *Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants* was forwarded to the Brock University Research Ethics Board and accepted. (Appendix D) Consideration for the rights and privacy of participants was sought wherever possible according to Brock University's ethical guidelines. This included the holding of the Focus Group session and One-to-One Interviews in locations, such as churches not associated with any one individual, to avoid risk of recognition. To protect youth, where possible, from participating out of obligation or coercion, gatekeepers were advised not to



make further enquiries with their youth. To encourage confidentiality, all participants in the Focus Groups were reminded of their responsibility to conduct themselves in a respectful manner and not to take any identifying content of the discussion beyond the membership of the group. All consent forms were completed on a voluntary basis. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw when completing consent forms and again at appropriate times throughout the study. Participants were also advised of resources available should they experience any emotional distress throughout the process. Finally, all data were treated confidentially and original documents and tapes were destroyed following the completion of the study. The participants were assigned pseudonyms that were used throughout all transcriptions and in any presentations.

### **Methodological Assumptions**

Several assumptions were made about the participants. By selecting youth in their mid to late teens and early 20s, I was making the assumption that they are cognitively advanced enough to be “reflective” learners using critical thinking skills, while also being old enough to feel and act on acquired norms from the various communities in their lives. This included, but was not exclusive to, their faith community. A related assumption was that the participants were able to recognize and articulate the normation they have experienced and the various communities and voices that have shaped their moral behaviour. Finally, by self-identifying as having corrected their moral behaviour, I was assuming that strong normation has occurred.

### **Limitations**

As there is limited empirical research on conscience and even less on the formation of conscience, only an introductory examination was possible within the

confines of a Master of Education research agenda. From the review of literature, it became evident that I was primarily informed by Western thinking, not only in the sources but even in the topic of conscience itself. With the Greco-Roman culture setting the foundational premise of conscience, more contemporary European and North Western influences took over. Even with the multidisciplinary approach now evident in research of conscience, there still remains an umbrella of Christian Western thought and interpretation. Even within this framework, it is evident from the literature review that among different Christian traditions, there are different notions of conscience. For example, this study does not fully reflect the brand of Roman Catholic conscience, as that is not my own religious background. (However, conscience, as taught through a Roman Catholic lens does emerge in the data.) How conscience is understood in other cultures and faiths, therefore, was not an objective of this study.

The multidisciplinary evidence only touched on in my Literature Review also indicates significant limitations. My goal was to examine conscience formation for educational purposes. However, research could just as easily be framed within the disciplines of psychology, theology, neuroscience, anthropology, etc. My tools of research were likewise drawn from my discipline of study and may not readily be accepted by, or generalized to, other disciplines.

This study was limited by its intent to examine conscience formation only through the framework of Thomas Green's (1999) treatise. It is a practical approach to what could be an overwhelming topic. It did, however, confine the theory that is being examined and might restrict other explanations from being identified or examined.

In an attempt to access a participant pool where strong normation was evident, I chose to focus on a faith community, particularly one that I am familiar with and where I can easily establish an effective research environment. However, the limitations to this are evident. The youth were drawn from only one denomination, located in Southern Ontario, and primarily only one region within Niagara. This limits any representational claim that can be made and generalization of results will be severely limited. With the critically low number of participants in this qualitative study, any representational claims or generalizing to a broader population would likewise be unwise.

Having the recruitment process take place through a church system, youth may, at least initially, only consider their *religious* backgrounds when constructing their moral behaviour and “act of conscience” narratives. In order to gain the benefit of examining strong normation from within a specific community, I then risked not successfully tapping into a richer, more diverse database. I attempted to overcome this by designing questions that were open enough not to limit responses.

As gatekeepers, I chose to approach clergy in a specific region of the diocese. It was their decision as to who to approach with the recruitment package. There are obvious limitations to this with the possibility of not accessing potentially strong participants. However, with the use of multiple gatekeepers and with the final criteria for selection resting with me, there was some assurance of diversity even among a broadly homogeneous sampling.

With self-reporting, there is a risk of distortion of the account of the actual behaviour. Qualitative research, however, allows for a deeper, more critical examination of this phenomenon through interview questions. With the initial self-selection process

involving disclosure of self-correcting of moral behaviour, there was some assurance that participants offered a valuable data source for conscience formation.

Although I conducted my research in an environment that I am familiar with, I did not have an established relationship with any of the participants, nor necessarily did they have one with each other. This possibly had an effect on their comfort and openness in both the Focus Group and One to One Interviews. Adding to any discomfort might have been the presence of audio and video equipment. To my advantage, however, the participants were familiar with the group discussion format used in the educational system and the diocesan youth programs which they had attended. I also have an extensive and respected professional background in leading such groups.

Perhaps the greatest limitation was me. As a novice researcher, I have limited experience in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. To minimize the limitation of my inexperience, I continually sought the support, insight, and direction from my thesis advisor and my field advisor.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS (ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION)**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the order of themes and questions used differs between the One-to-One Interviews and the Focus Group. The interactive nature of the Focus Group, in particular, refined the intended themes even as the session unfolded. Participants not only shared their personal narratives but also built a collective opinion on the “theory” of conscience formation. The data from the Focus Group, therefore, have an organic and evolutionary character. For this reason, the analysis that follows is independent for the two phases, with a coming together in the final section.

The analysis is presented in three sections: (a) One-to-One Interviews, (b) Focus Group, and (c) Interpretation and Discussion. For the first two sections, analysis is presented by themes specific to each section. In the Interpretation and Discussion section, where all data are collated and interpreted, the themes are arranged for easy flow. For all sections, a brief summary paragraph is included following each theme identified.

As discussed in the methodology, questions were chosen to align with the themes from Green’s (1999) treatise. However, the specific terminology used by Green (e.g., norms, normation, reflective judgement, reflexive (moral) emotions, etc.) were not introduced during the research component. Likewise, Green’s terminology is not introduced into the initial analysis. Instead, the bridge between the chosen language of participants and that of Green’s is made in the Interpretation and Discussion section. There is, therefore, an interpretative risk when making that bridge. There may be specific locations in the analysis and interpretation where the bridge may be questioned. When taken in its entirety, however, (i.e., when all the data are held up together) I believe it will be clear that there is an alignment with Green’s terminology. Only the term, *voices*, was

specifically used in questions, with interpretation fully in the hands of the participants, and, as will be seen, it was used with a simpler intent than that of Green's (1999) theory of five *voices of conscience*.

### **One-to-One Interviews**

#### *Sarah*

Sarah is a first year university student, living in residence, and away from home for the first time. She reported that her parents emigrated from England and she has two younger siblings. Sarah also stated that she has had a lifetime of membership in the Anglican Church. Currently, she is not attending church "because of work and stuff." Although Sarah has worked in the past, she currently does not work while attending university. Sarah demonstrated an energized and engaging personality. The interview was conducted in a church office on a quiet Saturday night. There was no reserve or hesitation in her demeanor. Dialogue came easily and it was an enjoyable interview. Sarah showed an interest in the research and welcomed more information concerning it.

#### *Jennifer*

At age 16, Jennifer was the youngest of the participants. She is still in high school (grade 11) and living at home. Jennifer reports she is an only child, and younger than her many cousins. Her mother's side is German and Russian, her father's Canadian. Her parents picked the Anglican Church for worship and Jennifer has had a life time of membership. She continues to attend church, regional youth ministry events, and even functions as a verger in her home parish. The interview was conducted, as requested, in her home. We settled in the basement and Jennifer's mother was upstairs.

At first, Jennifer appeared a little uncertain and reserved. She did, however, seem

to relax, and, except for a few of her responses, she did not hesitate to express her thoughts. Jennifer's younger age and level of maturity was evident in her behaviour. Very early in the interview she became emotional when talking about the loss of her grandparents. She also demonstrated a hesitation to share when she thought that, by admitting that "she heard voices in her head" when engaged in moral debate, she might be seen as having some sort of psychological problem.

### *Susan*

At the age of 18, Susan is one of the older children in a very large blended family. Her biological mother divorced her biological father when Susan was quite young. Her mother had a number of other relationships (and children) before settling into her current marriage about 6 years ago, when Susan was a young teenager. Recently, Susan returned to high school and to her family home after a year estranged from both. During that time she lived with friends and worked part time. Susan had attended a Roman Catholic Church in her childhood, primarily with her grandmother. For some years now, her nuclear family has attended an Anglican Church, although not regularly, and Susan currently does not attend church. As well as completing school, now back on schedule with her peers, Susan is also working two part time jobs.

Susan, although recruited for the study through a parish priest, is a young person with whom I am familiar. The interview was conducted in my home and she was very comfortable and relaxed with me. She showed no emotional distress even though she made some significant disclosures. She was very supportive of the research and was interested in hearing more about it.

### *Tommy*

Tommy is 19 years old, attending university in his local community, living at home, and working part time. He is the youngest of four children, and the only one still at home. Throughout his childhood, Tommy, with his family, has loyally attended an Anglican Church where he was very active as a server for a number of years. Currently, however, Tommy attends a Community Church, “because it is a little bit more upbeat and modern.” Tommy and I share the same childhood parish and I am familiar with his parents. Tommy also attends a local university, which is where we conducted the interview. Tommy demonstrated a confident personality and strong beliefs. He did, however, struggle to find answers to many of the interview questions as they made him think outside of the theoretical and rational style he prefers. Conversation around emotions was difficult, with periods of silence as he searched for a response. As well, he had to be repeatedly encouraged to give examples.

### *One-to-One Interview Findings*

The following analysis addresses the themes of: (a) awareness, (b) normation, (c) development, (d) voices, (e) reflexive emotions, and (f) motivation.

*Awareness.* For the purposes of establishing common language and taking a broad pulse of the participant’s self-awareness, the following three questions are asked: “Can you describe your moral character?”; “In general terms, what determines how you behave morally?”; and, “What would you call what guides your behaviour?”

Three participants spoke positively of their moral character. Jennifer, however, offered a negative perspective of herself, she responded, “I’m kind of worried about not living up to expectations of what I’m supposed to do morally.” Even when I asked,



“Would you consider yourself a good person?” she replied, “I guess.” Jennifer’s poor self-esteem with regard to her moral character continued throughout the interview.

Responses were diverse to the question, “What determines how you behave morally?” Sarah simply stated that her “feelings” and “instinct” determined her behaviour. Jennifer quickly focused on the “Dos and Don’ts”, she was brought up with. Susan reported, “I think of it on my own....I just believe what I believe.” And Tommy indicated that his faith and upbringing determined his behaviour.

After these initial questions I tried to use the chosen language each participant offered in his/her responses. Sarah resisted using terms like morals, values, beliefs, etc.; she repeatedly just used the term “feelings.” Jennifer, however, explicitly located the “dos and don’ts” of moral behaviour within the word *conscience*, having been taught the concept in her Roman Catholic elementary school. Susan chose to use the terms “values” and “morals”, and Tommy used the language of “principles” and “guidelines.”

From these introductory questions, a notion of conscience was beginning to be revealed. Participants indicated that their moral behaviour had to do with independent thought about right and wrong, dos and don’ts, values and morals, principles and guidelines, and also had to do with accessing feelings and instinct.

Only at the end of the interview were participants asked specifically about conscience, their awareness of the notion, and their understanding of it. At this point in the interview, participants had now been able to collect their various thoughts. Sarah answered,

When I hear the word conscience, I think of Pinocchio, the little guy on the shoulder telling you what to do. To me, that feels like someone else is telling me

what to do. But I like the idea that I'm telling myself what to do. I like being independent.

Jennifer reported conscience is a term that she uses, but she added that although she was taught about conscience in her Grade 8 Religion class, she has now taken it on as her own. When asked to define conscience, she answered,

The way the teacher explained it was pretty much you listen to the angel on your shoulder, not the devil on your shoulder.... Now it's just kind of like the voice in the back of my head saying 'don't do this', or, "you should do this."

Susan reported that she is aware of her conscience "all the time." She summed it up by saying, "It's what weighs out the bad and the good, and what your intuition is telling you, what your head is telling you, what your heart is telling you."

Tommy answered,

I have thought about it and a lot of people do conscience as like the good angel and the bad devil on your shoulder, but I think there is a lot more than that. It is a lot more complex, especially for me because I think everything through. I don't really have a good angel and bad devil. I have 50 of all the different [...] from pure sainthood to pure evil, I have 50 people in my head ... I use people just because that is what everyone one uses, but I don't think it is people, I think it is myself and my experiences ... this is how I know.

Tommy defined conscience as "the process of making the decision. It's going off of your experiences and your beliefs and your morals and pulling them all together to have arguments for the good and bad of a decision."

*Awareness summary.* Sarah, Susan, and Tommy clearly located their conscience

internally and considered it to be a process of decision making and telling them what to do. Only for Jennifer did it also involve an external source telling her “what to do.”

Sarah, Susan, and Tommy also understood themselves to have a strong moral character, confident in their selfhood. Only Jennifer indicated that she is burdened with outside “expectations.” Conscience, for these participants, implied self-judgment; it is about “knowing” bad from good. Conscience is also about the “head” (beliefs and morals), and the “heart” (feelings, intuition) working together as a “team.”

*Normation.* For the purpose of examining the formation of their moral behaviour, participants were asked questions about: (a) where their values and morals came from, (b) their sense of being “taught” values and morals, (c) how their values and morals have changed, (d) whether some values and morals are stronger, (e) whether they think about consequences, and, (f) whether they intervene in the moral behaviour of others.

All participants identified their family unit, or individual family members, as the primary source of their moral development. They stated that “upbringing” is how their moral character was formed and, to differing degrees, family still remains an important factor. Sarah continues to access her family’s voice to guide some of her behaviours. She reported that her family has “always been with me and I trust my family 100%. If they say something is not right, then I trust them.” She indicated, however, that in the end it is an independent decision. Tommy, too, reported a strong family influence. He responded, “I have a strong sense of family. That’s a very strong thing for me, and so I value family and closeness and community.” Susan and Jennifer identified individual family members other than their parents. For Susan, it was a grandmother and an older brother that she “looks up to.” For Jennifer, it was her grandparents with whom she

often stayed.

Besides family members or the family unit, 2 participants identified their church involvement and the Bible as the guide for what is correct moral behaviour. Sarah stated, "I think the stories in the Bible tell you a lot on how a good society should work; the stories, the morals, the ethics behind the stories are good building blocks to start from."

Participants also included membership in other communities as having an influence on their moral behaviour. Besides her family and the Bible, Sarah reported that "the people of the church" helped in her formation., "What you see in other people helps because you have something to look forward to... you look up to them, you trust them." Tommy reported,

I was very, very involved with a lot of different groups. They mostly had very similar morals and values, like the Scout's is, *Be Prepared* ... things like that, *Do Your Best*, and *Be Prepared*; those are things I follow all the time.

Besides identifying her grandparents, Jennifer, when asked, "Where do you think your morals came from?", stated that her Grade 8 curriculum included a religion class. Her narrative, however, revealed a very negative association with her Roman Catholic school experience. She reported being the victim of bullying, because she was one of only a few non-Catholics in her class. For this reason, the "dos and don'ts" she had been taught were associated with this negative experience. Jennifer concluded, "I hated it [school]."

Jennifer was the only participant who suggested she was *taught* the dos and don'ts that guide her behaviour--at least those acquired through the school system. Otherwise, participants saw the influential people and communities in their formation years more as

role models. Referring to her moral behaviour, Sarah reported, “It wasn’t really taught to me. I see how other people react to certain things; I see how other people talk to other people...I just pick up on it.” Tommy, too, reported he was not taught his moral behaviour but that the people and communities “just introduced me to what their beliefs and morals are, and that allowed me to choose my own.” Even Jennifer, when speaking about the influence of her grandparents, spoke of moral acquisition more like the other participants, “I just idolized so much of what they did, and that just kind of stuck with me.”

*Normation summary.* For these participants, strong formation was achieved through intimate relationships and communities, the most important one being the family; and the other communities including: faith communities (even the communities found in Bible stories), school, and organized groups such as Scouts and a rowing team. It has been in these communities that participants had experienced attachment, and had imparted their trust and respect. They valued the moral codes, looked up to individual members, and acquired the “good building blocks” that became their “guide for what is correct moral behaviour.” Typically, the acquisition of morals and values was not through transmission or teaching but through an observing and choosing to follow certain people, “role models”, whom the participants had “trusted” or “idolized.”

It is interesting to note that at the end of the interview, Sarah added an insight about her formation. She reflected,

Growing up, I think, movies is the big part of doing the right thing, now that I’m thinking about Disney movies.... they tell you the same things church tells you.... You watch Disney shows when you are a kid. You learn how to be nice to your

friends. Even T.V. shows, they are about how to do things right when you are little. They definitely portray that through media; they try and build a nice and good society.

*Development.* All participants recognized that their moral behaviours have changed since childhood. Tommy expressed an understanding that, with development, there comes a “refining” of beliefs, and that morals need to be “used” to become strong.

When you’re young, you don’t really have very strong morals, values, just because you’re not in the thinking stage yet, you’re in “let’s go out and play”. So, in that stage that’s mostly where moral behaviour is taught, so you just mimic what you are told to do. But when you are older, and you start to think, and start to formulate your own goals, your moral behaviour and your morals will change from what you were taught when you were younger.

Susan, too, remembered childhood as a time of no worries, no stress, and no choice.

You’re just a child, and you’re free.... then you get older every thing hits you, reality comes, and you see what the world is actually about, so, everything changed.... your maturity level changes, and who you are changes because now you are seeing the whole picture, you are not seeing it as a play-day all the time... and then you realize your own self, your individuality, and who you are and what you want to do.

For Susan, the dos and don’ts messages that had been given to her in her childhood, lost their power and other forces had taken over.

When you are kids, you are always taught, don’t do drugs, don’t do drugs: it’s [drilled] always into your head, and when you are older it doesn’t seem as hard

and it's not the peer pressure that they tell you, and it's easier to get into, and an easier escape route from reality, and you start to take that path.

It was not until there was life experience and "maturity" that Susan independently restored some of her childhood moral teachings into the stronger guides for her current moral behaviour. Jennifer reported that it was not until secondary school that she had experienced positive peer relations and had learned "how to act around them [peers].... what's right to do around them, and what I shouldn't do around them." For Sarah, "When I was little you think certain things are *so bad*, you'd never do that!" Now with regards to university life, Sarah reflected, "My family is not there .... I still talk to them all the time, but it's new people, it's new experience."

All the participants believed that some beliefs, morals, and principles are stronger than others. Sarah reported there are "big situations", like church, drugs and alcohol, and then there are "little ones." Jennifer also suggested that there are some basic moral behaviours which are more important. For example, she believes that being courteous is an important moral behaviour. "I've seen what happens when people are rude to each other, and I really don't want that to happen, so I really try to be courteous and nice to others." Susan spoke of "higher-above" morals that are stronger than "lower ones", the primary one being "always putting other people before myself". Tommy believes that

If you are using a lot more morals in one area they will get stronger ... but if you don't have to in another area, it won't get as strong, you won't have as much an opinion or a belief in it because you haven't had to use it.

He quoted a teacher who had said, "Repeated knocking polishes the stone."

When asked, "Would you say that your values or morals are consistent in all

situations?” Sarah reported “it’s situational.” She stated, “It really does depend on the situation ... you can’t put a white line down .... If the situation happens and you have to cross that line, you cross that line.” Both Jennifer and Tommy reported being pretty consistent in their moral behaviour. Susan’s response reflected the more complicated learning process she has experienced. She answered,

Yes, I think so because ... its going to come back, my work ethics, that shows I value working. If I lose my job, it will affect my school, because I won’t have a job. If I was in college or university and I didn’t have a job, I wouldn’t be able to pay for it, which would affect school and then my family and friends would be disappointed in me.

When asked, “Have you ever experienced tension, or even competition, between any values or morals?” all participants answered “yes”. Sarah added, “I try not to.... I don’t have these hard situations. I don’t put myself into situations where I have to deal with hard situations.” Similarly, Tommy responded, “Sometimes, but it doesn’t usually happen.” Participants were able to recognize that there are, however, moments when the stronger guiding principle is not obvious and there is not an easy answer. Sarah was able to recall a story in which her best friend “got his girlfriend pregnant.” Sarah reflected on the struggle she had had trying to support him, while acknowledging the potential breach of confidentiality, when she informed her own mother while seeking guidance and support.

A question was asked about choosing to change a moral behaviour. Sarah reported that she had changed the clothes she wears, in order to avoid brand-name clothing, and by choosing to reduce her focus on “material” things in life. She had also



chosen to drop a boyfriend because of her conflicted feelings regarding the theology presented in his “born again” Christian church. (Appendix E) Jennifer indicated that throughout elementary school, she had not cared about keeping up with her work, knowing that she was considered “smart” by the teacher. “Now... I’m struggling with getting my homework done, but I’m trying to change that.” On a more serious note, Jennifer reported that in earlier grades she “used to fight back a lot” when being bullied. But, “Now I know that I shouldn’t be punching people, unless they hit me first and its self defence.” Susan, at a young age, had chosen to leave her family and school and to live on her own. During that time, she reported having chosen to use drugs. After approximately a year, Susan then chose to return to school, return home, to sever herself from many of her previous friends and to stop using drugs (Appendix F). For Tommy, the change he identified is how he thinks of himself. He reported,

When I was young, and I didn’t have self-control, I used to have the emotions of failure and stupidity, where I just would beat myself up about it. Now, I look at it as, You know what? It’s who I am. I’m a creature of habit. Even if I do beat myself up a little bit, it is not going to help me change. It’s who I am.

Tommy also described himself as being very competitive. But now, in a leadership context at camp, he will intentionally let others win so as to “appease the masses.”

The question was asked, “Do you think about other people’s values, morals, and ethics?” Since a primary moral principle of Sarah’s is to give others the benefit of the doubt, she responded to the above question by saying, “I don’t judge people. I don’t see them any differently if they are different than me. I just know what I’m like and I will stick to that.” Giving an example, she suggested,

I will never do drugs, but if someone does them and it doesn't affect their life negatively, then why should I stop them. It's their own lives, their own beliefs; I'm not putting any of my beliefs down their throats at all.

However, when discussing an earlier question regarding how consistent her own moral behaviours are, and competing morals, she did relate a story of when she did intervened to correct a friend. She had tried to change a close friend's behaviour after discovering the friend was anorexic (Appendix E). Sarah simply saw her involvement as 'being there for a friend' which she had done when supporting the best friend who had got his girlfriend pregnant. Jennifer did understand that her intervening in a situation is an example of thinking about other people's values or morals. She shared a story of being the "the diplomatic one", and trying to resolve a moral conflict among her friends. They had proposed to share a hotel room for an upcoming trip with the brother of one of the girls and Jennifer offered the resolution. However, like Sarah, Jennifer is sensitive to people's differences and recognized that her friends are "from all different religions." She would not try to change someone else's behaviour except "in an extreme situation." In response to the question, "Do you ever think about someone else's values and morals?" Susan answered, "I usually do, because of my morals. I don't understand why people don't have the same morals as me. Why don't they see the same things and I look at what they morally [are about]? So, I do look at it." And to the follow-up question, "Do you ever try to correct other people?" she responded,

I don't try to correct, but I try to understand what they're about. And I try to let them understand what my morals are about and if not, their opinions are theirs and I can't do anything. I can't force them, I can't beat them into doing the same

things, so it's who they are, and it's who I am.

Tommy reflected,

I think of society as a whole; we're not just individuals. We're all in this together. Sometimes I will make actions and decisions that go against my morals to appease the masses.... I think of my actions before I do it. So, something is happening, and I have my opinion, but everyone else has a different opinion on it, I don't usually raise my voice, because it's already defeated by the majority, so I just accept what their decision is.

When asked again if he has ever tried to change someone else's behaviour, Tommy shared a story about having tutored a Grade 8 student who had been planning on joining friends Devil's Night, to "egg somebody." "It's a lot of fun." Tommy challenged the youth by asking, "But do you think it's right?" and invited the student to recall when his own mother's car had been egged. The youth stated it would be his friends, not him, who will throw the eggs. Tommy replied, "Aren't you implying your consent that this is a good thing, just because you're being with them and you're laughing with them."

(Appendix G).

As an extension of the formation enquiry, questions were asked about the notion of a maturing conscience. Tommy used the analogy of evolution when he reflected on maturing moral behaviour. He offered,

an animal comes out, it is introduced to a cold planet, it can either keep on doing what it is doing because it thinks it can survive the cold planet, or it changes, so that it has maybe a bigger fur coat or blubber to make it able to survive. So your morals come up... a situation happens where you [decide] either, "My morals are

good- I keep on going the way it is”, or “My moral is not right - I need to change.”

He then gave an example of how, in order to avoid being scolded, he nowadays chooses to lie to his parents whenever he is asked if he has lost something.

Thinking about consequences is a big part of the maturing process. When asked, “Do you ever think about consequences?”, all participants said “yes.” Sarah indicated, “All the time.” Tommy stated, “Yes. I always try to weigh my actions. If I do this than what’s going to happen?” Susan also replied, “All the time. It is what I do.” Jennifer’s response was a little different. She stated, “Yeah. Most of the time with what I do, either way, I know there will be consequences. So I usually go with the lesser of two evils.”

*Development summary.* For these participants, development in moral behaviour involves dealing with changing life circumstances, specifically, the communities of which they are part and the opportunities and experiences to which they are exposed. It is also about more complicated life experiences and an awareness of the “whole” society. It involves engaging in a more advanced cognitive process than that of their childhood. It involves reconsidering previously existing values and morals and “refining” them. It involves considering multiple values and morals, even competing ones, and with more complicated emotions. It involves changing their own behaviour and even weighing in on the behaviour of others. It involves a stronger sense of consequences for oneself and for others. It involves a stronger sense of who they are, their *selfhood*, their identity; accepting themselves and being prepared to share who they are with others.

*Voices.* A series of questions were asked which attempted to help the participants identify some of the values, morals, and principles acquired by the participants; that is,

possible “voices” of conscience.

A primary principle for Sarah is to give people the benefit of the doubt, that is, not to judge people straight away. She reported,

I **respect** people right off the bat, unless they do something to disprove that they should be respected.... Same with being **polite**, you be polite to people and it makes their day better, and then it makes you feel happier, and I like doing it.

She also emphasized **honesty**; she likes “to tell how it is. I’m not going to sugar-coat anything.” Jennifer’s primary principles included **duty** and **loyalty**, as well as being **courteous**. With regards to duty, she commented, “Like the homework thing, in elementary school ... I wasn’t doing it because people were chasing me around for it. And now that I can do it at my own pace, I’m getting better at it.” She also stated strongly, “I’m fiercely loyal to my friends.” Like Sarah, Susan, too, emphasized honesty. She reported, “I hate liars. I love to be honest.” She also shared with Sarah a respect for others, saying, “No one is less than another person.” Susan also expressed a very strong **work ethic**, “I put all my effort into it [work]; I don’t slack around and talk and goof around.” Tommy responded, “it’s hard to describe your own morals”, but he was able to articulate some primary guiding principles. Specifically, he reported, “Probably one of my biggest morals is the desire to do everything to the best of my ability.” His strong **work ethic** and very “competitive” nature is qualified with the caveat, “Personal excellence is good and all, but if it’s just to further exceed yourself.... I think it should be because it’s just what you think is right.”

*Voices summary.* Most of the various values, morals, and principles identified above have to do with relating to others: voices about living in community. For Susan,

“respect for others” goes as far as, “always putting other people before myself”, although she does add, “You should never sacrifice yourself for someone else.” There was also a voice about doing one’s best, that is, a strong work ethic, yet still for the sake of the “whole.”

*Reflexive emotions.* Questions were asked in order to explore the emotions that accompany moral behaviours, their complexity, and how they change. Sarah understands emotions to be the essence of her moral behaviour. She replied to the question, "Are you aware of your feelings when you are doing something because of your values or morals?" by stating, "Yeah, because I follow my heart." For example, she spoke of the emotions she experienced when attending her boyfriend’s church that had moved her to break up with him. She reflected, "when I was being told I had to be afraid of God, I got angry. This is not right! I took a stand." With regard to the emotion of guilt, Sarah commented, “I don’t like feeling guilty. When you are little and you break something, you feel really bad, you feel guilty. I don’t like that feeling, so why should I feel that feeling if I don’t have to?” Positive emotions were also associated with her moral behaviour. "I also feel happy when I’m doing something good, and I have that warm bubbly feeling inside me when I know I’ve done something good" Jennifer described attending to her moral emotions:

There are times where I do, and times where I don’t. But if it’s just small things, like, yeah, whatever, doesn’t really affect me. But ... a couple of months ago, something happened that made me extremely angry and, it’s like, okay, I will not do this [act out aggressively] even though this happened.

Susan responded to the question about her awareness of moral emotions much as Sarah

had done.

you have this gut feeling, your intuition comes into play, especially for women, they have a very strong intuition. So, I always get that [instant] feeling, that upset stomach, that makes you feel like you're almost sick, and when there's nothing wrong I'm happy. You just feel good about yourself. So, yeah, I'm aware of it.

Tommy also acknowledged the importance of gut feelings. "I think emotions are the hard thing to deal with and understand ... I would say emotions start to kick in when you are forced to use gut feelings." For Tommy, emotions are only one factor in the game of "probability" to determine which path you take. When asked, "You let your gut help you make a decision?" Tommy responded, "Yeah. It's just like taking a multiple choice quiz; they [emotions] always go with your gut choice. Don't try to over-think it."

All participants acknowledged there can be complexity to their moral emotions.

Sarah, when asked, "Are any of these emotions complicated?" responded,

Oh yeah, sometimes I can't figure them out. That's when I talk to people. Even if it isn't my mom, it could be my best friend, my roommate. If I have a weird feeling I can't understand, I have to talk about it to figure out what it is.

Jennifer, when asked if the emotions tied to her relationship with her boyfriend are complicated, responded, "They're extremely complicated." She spoke of feeling happiness and "a little bit of guilt." For Susan, emotions can

be very complicated because you are trying to work through everything and anger gets in the way, or you are very sad and that gets in the way and can distract your thinking about who you want to be and what's going to happen, because you are not thinking clearly.

Later, she added, “They [emotions] are way more complicated. Because when you are little, it’s just small things, and when you are big, its huge situations and huge emotions that come into play.” Tommy also found emotions can get complicated. In my effort to draw examples from him, I asked a number of follow-up questions to move him out of his more theoretical and rational responses. Eventually, he stated, “I try to push my emotions aside when I’m trying to make a decision, because emotions just make things messy.” For all participants, intimate relationship, that is, having a boyfriend or girlfriend, presented some of the most conflicted situations involving moral emotions (Appendices E,F,G,H).

Participants were asked if the emotions experienced in moral behaviour have changed over time. They all reflected that emotions, as experienced in childhood, have changed. Sarah reported,

I definitely have more emotions now than I’ve ever had in my entire life.... when you are little, like, very little, emotions don’t affect you as much, you just know what your parents tell you, what is right or wrong. That’s when you are little, but when you develop your own sense of what’s right or wrong, that’s when feelings come into play.

Jennifer reflected, “I didn’t really feel guilty a lot, because I just chalked everything up to, ‘Oh it’s his fault’.... Now, if I say something I shouldn’t have, and don’t realize until afterwards, I feel extremely guilty.” Susan reported that as compared to the emotions of childhood, “you are still feeling the same emotions, except you can control it more and you are not freaking out more. So you are as much upset, but not over the small things, only over the big things.” Tommy was able to share this insight, “When I was young,



and I didn't have self-control, I used to have the emotions of failure and stupidity, where I just would beat myself up about it. Now, I look at it as, 'You know what? It's who I am'."

*Reflexive emotions summary.* From the four narratives, some of the emotions associated with moral behaviours include: guilt, fear, anxiety, anger, happiness, love, lust, amusement, sadness, self-acceptance, approval, delight, and trustworthiness. Moral emotions went hand in hand with conscience and moral behaviour. Emotions were typically the signal that a moral or conscience process was unfolding, especially if it was complicated. When in a moral dilemma, "following the heart" or trusting "the gut" was a common theme among participants. Moral emotions, therefore, challenged the thinking capacity, at times almost taking over. With maturity, experience, and the capacity to look at consequences, emotions were reportedly better managed, but also more complicated. Although guilt was an emotion found in the narratives, even starting in childhood, there were a number of other moral emotions identified, including ones that were positive, such as happiness. Participants preferred to avoid guilt and other uncomfortable emotions and desired the feeling of happiness which arose when they knew they were doing the "right" thing.

*Motivation.* To wrap up the interview, the following question was asked, "Why do you think your values and morals can have this power to affect your behaviour?" This proved somewhat difficult for some of the participants to respond to. Sarah, after a pause, answered, "Definitely my upbringing." She later added, "You hear these people who are suicidal because they don't feel happy [...] then there's something you have to change about yourself. I like being who I am. I like being upbeat, I like having that

sense of spark.” When the question was rephrased to, “Is there a source to these values and morals, a sense of where it all comes from?” Sarah responded, “My heart, I follow my heart, I follow my intuition.” Jennifer responded to the first question by saying, “I think that humans have this need for rules, or something to follow, and morals are there for you to follow. So, it’s kind of instinctive to follow morals.” To the question about the source of morals, she replied, “Just the way you are brought up, the way you are taught. Those can all affect the different morals that you’ve got.” Susan responded,

it makes us feel better about ourselves, or worse ...when we’re in a situation and you’re thinking about all the consequences and what’s happening, you realize something inside of you hurts if you don’t do what you think is right.... It’s who you are and how you feel. And how you feel about it makes it part of who you’ve become.

Tommy stated, “I live my life based on my morals.” When asked, “Where does that power come from?” he answered,

Just self-power. Just through myself. I believe that is the way it should be done and I’m going to model my life so that I’m continuing on these beliefs. It’s just because of how strongly I feel about my morals that I shape my behaviour to match my morals.

*Motivation summary.* All participants saw their upbringing lying at the root of their moral character. Their conscience (an intuitive, internal power), however, developed later as part of their identity. The 3 participants who professed strong moral character also indicated an acceptance and like for who they have become. Jennifer, the only participant who seemed to still carry the weight of external expectations, also did

not have the higher self-confidence and self-esteem that the others had. This could be due a number of factors. She was the youngest participant and not as developmentally advanced as the others. She also had a negative experience in elementary school, without a positive peer community and with aggression problems. These factors may all have impacted her development: psychologically, socially, and emotionally. With more positive peer relations at high school, Jennifer reported advancement in her moral development.

### **Focus Group**

Where during the One-to-One Interviews there was only the single voice of the participant responding to my questions, in the focus group, by contrast, there were 5 voices (participants) responding first to the questions and then to each other as responses were shared and explored. As a facilitator, my engagement was less than in the One-to-One Interviews. The fellow-participants provided acknowledgement and encouragement to each other's responses. In some instances, participants extended the enquiry by contributing their own questions.

The expectation was that the data collected would offer a different dimension to the research topic. Participants would have the opportunity to hear each other's contributions, to engage in exploratory dialogue, and to respond to the theoretical framework within which the research worked. Participants, in fact, became more actively engaged in the analysis, and the topic of study was advanced in this group setting.

### *Focus Group Profile*

There were 5 participants in the single Focus Group that was arranged. Two participants were directly recruited and became the gatekeepers for recruiting the other

three. This is a version of ‘snowball sampling’ (Crestwell, 2008, p. 151). All participants came from the same youth ministry network. There were 2 males and 3 females. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 (i.e., Grade 12 to 3<sup>rd</sup>-year university). Two participants, also siblings, attended the same parish. Although no one participant knew everyone else, there was a general comfort in the room and dialogue flowed easily. Perhaps because of the participation of 5 peers, as against only two of us in the One-to-One Interviews, there was also more humour and laughter in the room.

### *Focus Group Findings*

The following analysis addresses the themes of: (a) an act of conscience, (b) motivation, (c) voices (and development), (d) normation, (e) reflexive emotions, (f) conscience and the sacred, and (g) defining conscience.

*An act of conscience.* Each story that was shared stood alone. Topics included: (a) advocating against homophobic language (James), (b) establishing a diet without fast food (Peter), (c) choosing to restrict shopping to second-hand clothing stores (Janice), (d) joining an environmental movement (Becky), and (e) cutting back on studying at university in order to restore some social activities (Beth). Becky spoke of a deep passion for Nature and her commitment to environmentalism, “I just kind of realized that this thing that we love, this Nature, the trees, all the beauty, all the stuff is in danger and that we should protect it.” Beth also connected her *act of conscience* with something very important to her, her health and well-being,

When I was in 1st year university, I made a lot of choices to do things like, stay in and study, and I drove myself absolutely nuts .... I came home at Christmas and realized there are things in my life that I enjoy and have completely forgotten

about.

She realized she is “not that kind of person” who could spend all her free time studying, as modeled by her roommate and others. Peter, after watching a movie called, *Super Size Me*, asked himself, “Why are we doing that?” and decided no longer to eat fast foods. James was “Googling” for a topic to prepare as a motion for a parliamentary-style youth event. He decided to address homophobia and the derogatory ways in which words associated with homosexuality are used. Janice’s decision was to purchase cheaper used clothing, following a missionary trip to Haiti where she had been overwhelmed by the poverty which she had witnessed there.

*Motivation.* Participants were invited to identify the motivation that they had heard in each other’s stories. Peter commented that in all the stories, there was some sort of conflict, “something that you see is not quite right.” Becky added that this conflict is a moment that “pushes a little bit too far” out of the “comfort zone”, where there is a new awareness of the conflict. For Janice, it was experiencing “a huge culture shock.” This included an “appreciation for the bigger picture” and the emerging capacity to see “the broader implications.” It also included a call to action, a realization that “something should be done.” Beth commented that it was a sort of breaking out of the “desensitization” that happens when you step back and look at the bigger picture.

Peter introduced the idea of acting on a *gut feeling*. He shared the story of his decision to attend his current university and stated, “There was no real reason. I don’t know why I chose [the university I did] for kinesiology. There are lots of other schools for it, but I just kind of had a gut feeling that that’s what I should do.” Becky, too,

acknowledged this gut feeling, even at the times she thought she should tell a white lie, “there’s something inside me and I just can’t [lie].”

*Motivation summary.* All the participants agreed that changing moral behaviour involved some sort of conflicted experience and a need to correct personal behaviour. This included taking into consideration the bigger picture, and being able to see broader implications. It also included a deep emotional response to act on their dis-ease. Participants recognized that sometimes, they did not know why they had made the moral decision they did, but that it was just a gut feeling.

*Voices (and development).* When asked to identify the different messages and the different places these messages were coming from-- the “voices” of conscience-- Becky offered this insight,

There’s something called... there’s a Christian view, like thrift, it’s about how you’re not to consume too much, to be appreciative of what you have, not to use too much excessive resources. Just like with people, if you have someone important in your life, not to take advantage of them.... That’s the voice, the idea that we should appreciate what you have and make the most of it.

Janice suggested, “I find the voice to be like, ‘How could you do this when someone else can’t’.” Beth responded, “I’m not really sure what voice it was, it’s just, ‘Okay, I’m going to sit down and study for 8 hours ... but that’s not fun, you’re going to get upset, you’re not going to do well’.”

When the conversation moved to competing, or quarrelling, voices and how decisions are made, Becky simply responded, “Who’s ever is the loudest.” Becky’s narrative, however, does hint at a developing conscience when she reflected, “It can be

difficult when you just believe in this environmentalism. I don't know, it's something I'm developing myself, what are my beliefs when it comes to the environment. Do I put people in front of trees?" Peter also demonstrated a developing conscience. He recalled,

When I went to university, my floor was a lot like high school just because I don't think they were very mature, where I was out of high school for a little bit and I know what I'm looking for. This drinking four times a week is just not what I'm looking for and I don't want to go to the pubs just to pick up the girls, so, I'm just not going to be a part of their scene.

Participants were asked, "Do any of these issues bring out enough passion in you to correct someone else? Have you had the experience where something that has been so important that you not only changed your own behaviour, but sought to correct someone else's?" All participants were able to share stories of efforts to raise the consciousness of others. Janice stated, "My roommate and I have an 'R' word-free zone", where the word 'retarded' is banned from their residence room. Becky, in order to address her frustration with peers coming up to her and talking about other girls with so much "meaningless dislike", ended up telling people, "You can't talk about other people to me because I can't take the hatred anymore." Becky did, however, qualify her effort by admitting that she did not really think she could change people. "I didn't actually ask them to stop, I just asked them to not say it to me." Peter, in his effort to reduce the use of derogatory, homophobic language, suggested that correcting others can be really awkward. Sometimes it is a good friend to whom he will say, "Is that really what you meant?" He often chose to do so because it was something he felt strongly about. Beth shared a story of being in a developing country with a team of workers and being

challenged to face her “addiction” for western chocolate bars, while those criticizing her indulged their smoking addiction. She struggled with the conflicting “voices” inside her, and decided not to say anything. (Appendix I)

*Voices summary.* The voices seem to come from a growing awareness of the bigger picture that has also changed how each participant looked at themselves. In some cases, this was revealed with self-recriminating questions. They were voices that challenged their comfort zone and compelled them to change their own behaviour and even perhaps strive to raise the consciousness of others.

*Normation.* I asked the questions: “How would you say that your conscience was formed? Could some of those voices you have recognized have been there in your childhood?” Peter stated, “Rather than just having society tell you your values, or maybe like, your parents telling you your values, you’re kind of creating your own values. So it’s not somebody else’s conscience anymore, it’s your own.” Recalling his childhood bullying, James indicated,

I began to understand what other people would feel like if I [...] and sort of generated a conscience that way - being able to understand better both sides of a situation. Having been bullied would help prevent me from being the bully later on.

Becky suggested that it had been in Grade 10 that she had discovered that there is “something you can put your passion into other than yourself; you get this greater sense of fulfillment, you get this better feeling inside of you.” Beth reflected, “I think when my conscience was formed was through me doing things and not realizing they were wrong and then my mother saying, “How would you feel if someone did that to you?” She



recalled a childhood incident where she had left her sister in the neighbourhood and returned home on her own. She reported that her parents' reaction was to ask her to think about what it would feel like to be abandoned like that. She eventually realized, "that was said every time I did something like that and after a while I started to think about that for myself before I did things." (Appendix I)

*Normation Summary.* Conscience formation, for these participants, had been an internal process of coming to know themselves and thinking for themselves. It was grounded in personal life experience, where *the other* became the framework from which participants examined themselves. It had been facilitated by significant individuals and communities, where morals, values, and principles were presented.

*Reflexive emotions.* In Becky's opening story, she identified feeling deep *love* for the environment. So much so, that she decided she needed to protect it from the "danger" it is in. Janice felt deep *discomfort* with her privileged position where she could choose to buy new fashions while the profoundly poor of Haiti could not. James felt deeply for the injustice of the unequal treatment gay people experience. For Beth, it was intense *frustration* and *shame* that she had lost an important part of her social life for no particular gain. "I didn't know myself well enough to find a way of life that works for me, as opposed to working for everyone else except for me." Peter felt *disgust* at the poor judgment he had witnessed in people who choose a fast-food diet over healthy homemade food. Becky was able to recall a childhood moment that provoked "the most *guilt* I ever felt in my entire life."

When I was in day care [...] I took this little coin set, plastic little coins, and I loved the loonies. I don't know why they were little plastic coins. I knew they weren't real, but I loved them so much, so I took one of the loonies one day and slipped it into my pocket as we were going to nap-time. I kept it. I had this little jar, and I put it in the bottom of the jar, and every day when I was home I would take it out and put it back and this continued for a year and I had this little plastic coin, and it didn't feel bad at all because I kind of thought they didn't notice- they didn't notice at all.... When I walked into the day care, I was looking at all the teachers, and looking at them. Every day, I was looking at them, and I started feeling more and more guilty. It went on for months and months and I looked at it every single day. I started this guilt, it just kind of built up inside me and I realized, what if other kids want to play? What if they don't have enough loonies? It was just guilt inside me for taking this from the day care. One day, after about a year later, I started crying and it was the morning, and I went over to my mom and I was carrying it, and I was, 'Mom I took this a year ago'. So, we called the day care. We made a point of walking over and giving them this fake coin.

James also recalled a childhood playground incident where guilt had overwhelmed him. While throwing rocks, a friend accidentally had got hit on the head. James' first response was to lie to the teacher and suggest that the friend had fallen and hit his head. It was his sense of guilt which later in the day had made him tell the truth about what had happened (Appendix I).

When asked what other feelings besides guilt are associated with conscience, Janice identified *fear*, as it related to possible consequences. Peter added *inspiration* and *excitement*. James offered, “There’s a certain level of *self-gratification*. Once you know you’ve done something that’s good, there is a certain selfish element, *altruism*, I suppose.”

*Reflexive emotions summary.* Through the various stories shared by participants, the following emotions were identified: love, discomfort, guilt, fear, inspiration, excitement, shame, frustration, and self-gratification. Even in their childhoods, some participants could recall incidents where moral feelings were internalized enough to correct their behaviour.

*Conscience and the sacred.* Participants were asked, “Is there a sense of sacred for you in any of your stories? Is there a sense of spirituality operating anywhere in that?”

For Beth, it meant being connected with the “whole.”

Spirituality for me is the most positive kind of connection that you can have between people.... There’s definitely a sense of acknowledging yourself in comparison to other people and maintaining a balance, and for me, seeing that balance is extremely spiritual and it helps me get through more difficult times.

Janice connected spirituality with the individualization of moral development (i.e., identity formation). She commented, “I feel like spirituality has a lot to do with how well you know yourself. And obviously, conscience has a lot to do with how well you know yourself, because it is you, basically.” James remarked,

I tend to be a very “big picture” sort of person. When it comes to making

decisions where there is a conscience aspect involved, it's not, "Is this right for me to be doing?", it's, "If every single person on the face of the Earth were to do what I'm doing now, would that be the right thing?"

Becky recognised that her deep *love* for the environment speaks to her as The Sacred. However, she added, "I think a lot of the time environmentalism can become its own religion. It can get a little bit wonky if some people really, really try to force environmentalism upon other people."

*Conscience and the sacred summary.* For the Focus Group participants, spirituality came through the individualization process, and a connectedness with the whole. It was linked to *being right* with oneself and being in union with the other-than-self.

*Defining conscience.* As a wrap-up, participants were invited to offer their definition of conscience. Peter simply stated, "It's an internal, gut feeling that guides your choices." Becky suggested that conscience is "the connection with things that are most important ... a mixture of all the voices, of all the things that are precious to you: Nature, other people, social responsibility, self-responsibility." For James, conscience has to do with "being able to acknowledge that bigger picture, understand what that involves, and still say you're happy with the decision you're making." Beth reported that she is aware of her conscience at times when there is more than one option, "and all the options have some level of discomfort for me." However, when she knows she has to do the "right thing", she finds clarity.

*Defining conscience summary.* Conscience, for these participants, is an internal process of decision making about important things. It examines the self in a framework

of right and wrong, in order to guide choices. It seeks to find a place with an acceptable level of discomfort in the context of The Whole.

### **Interpretation and Discussion**

The One-to-One Interviews and the Focus Group attempted to explore the following research objectives:

1. To what extent is there individual awareness of conscience?
2. What are the voices of conscience?
3. What role does normation play in conscience formation?
4. Is there an “other” voice of conscience, not bound by normation and prudence?
5. What reflective emotions are dominant, or more developed, in conscience formation?
6. How does the sacred define “things that matter?”

The discussion that follows will merge the findings from both the One-to-One Interviews and the Focus Group as they address these research questions. However, the discussion will not follow the above order of questions (as they were first proposed in Chapter One), but will now flow as it emerged from my analysis of the data. The discussion will work within the framework of Green’s (1999) treatise on conscience formation, and will try to bridge the vocabulary contained within the narratives with Green’s vocabulary of reflexive judgment, reflexive emotions, norms, normation, and voices.

#### *To What Extent is There Awareness of the Conscience?*

Green (1999) commented, “Conscience is often described, in fact, as an interior voice of the self speaking to the self, offering advice, counsel, judgment, and reproach”

(p. 24). Although conscience is not a word common in contemporary speech, it is very much part of common experience. Research data indicated that the participants in this study had been able to engage, through personal narrative and dialogue, in a reflective process on the topic of conscience. Participants did not question the topic, ask for definitions, or resist responding to questions. At times, however, participants did need to pause and consider their responses, some admitting they have not had an opportunity to dialogue on this topic before, and that it made them think. Rarely was the actual word “conscience” used in any of the responses. Participants in the One-to-One Interviews, however, readily placed the notion of conscience within the context of moral behaviour, and participants in the Focus Group readily recalled *acts of conscience* and retrieved other stories of moral conduct. Regardless of whatever else plays a role in the governance of moral behaviour, conscience has a prominent position.

As reported by a few participants, awareness of conscience is somewhat limited by its “habitual” nature. In their daily experiences of good moral behaviour, the absence of guilt, and the pleasure of feeling good about themselves, in essence disguised the conscience, by not demanding attention to discomfort. Typically, it was the discomfort of negative moral emotions that prompted a participant to recognize he/she was engaged in a conflicted moral dilemma. When asked directly some version of the question, “Has the idea of a conscience been something you’ve even thought about or are aware of?” responses indicated that to differing degrees there is *consciousness of the conscience*.

*Defining Conscience.* Green (1999) wrote, “Each of us from time to time renders judgment on our actions and even on our own character” (p. 21). He defined conscience as ...*reflexive judgment about things that matter* (1999, p. 21). At the conclusion of both

the Interviews and Focus Group, participants were directly asked, “What is your understanding of conscience?” This strategy would have affected the data, in that everyone by that point had had the benefit of the preceding hour or so of focused thought. Nevertheless, in examining the data, the following summary aligns with the core principles of conscience that emerge throughout the narratives. The data clearly reflected Green’s notion of *reflexive judgment*. Participants repeatedly spoke of an independent, interior process of discerning right from wrong, bad from good. They described it as an intuitive process which bonds the head and the heart, and is part of their identity. We heard self-reproach in Janice’s narrative, “How could you do this when someone else can’t”; self-judgment in Peter’s voice, “Why are we doing this?” and reflexive counsel and advice in Beth’s weighing the benefits of studying and socializing. Reflexive judgment, for the participants, also included looking at consequences, and with foresight.

Green (1999) argued that conscience is imminent (self-given) with judgments that have authority (p. 22). Participants readily used the language of right and wrong, or good and bad to describe the authoritative process of their conscience. Becky’s narrative revealed this when she acknowledged, “Sometimes something inside me,” or Susan reported, “you just have to go with the right decision in your gut.” There was a strong theme of “gut feelings” found within the narratives. For these participants authority is located in gut feelings.

#### *What Role does Normation Play in Conscience Formation?*

Green (1999) argued that social norms (rules of *ought* and *should*) have the power to govern. For the purpose of this research, values, morals, principles, and beliefs were

all accepted as indicators of acquired social norms, in that they were identified in stories of moral behaviour and linked with judgments of “ought and should.”

In order to govern, conscience requires strong normation. However, Green (1999) indicated that conscience is “shaped only within some membership and for the sake of life within the membership so formed” (p. 70). He noted that strong normation is, confined increasingly to those relationships whose nature intrinsically requires it, and such relations are seldom found in anything that we would call a public. Instead, they tend to be confined to the kind of privacy and intimacy found among friends, within families or ethnic and religious groups, or within religious-like associations, like athletic clubs, whose members have achieved a rare sense of their mutuality and joint identity. (p. 78)

For these participants, there was evidence of strong normation with the acquisition of norms substantially through an attachment to “intimate moral communities.” These included: (a) family of origin, (b) extended family, (c) church communities, (d) friendships, and (e) other organized groups with a moral code. “Upbringing”, however, was the primary response to questions regarding formation. Family is always identified as a strong formative community, a source of childhood moral authority. Other communities identified included the church, Scouts, school, and clubs. Surprisingly to me, watching movies was also recognized as a means by which values and morals were acquired. It might be argued that there is a sense of “membership”, perhaps even strong normation, in the culture of Disney movies, where, among other things, a moral code is typically presented. One participant recognized the harmful influences of society when strong morals are not operating. This reflection



supports Green's (1999) concern that there is a reduction in the number of communities where strong normation is possible, and, consequently, weak normation and underdeveloped conscience are more prevalent.

Green (1999) argued that the acquisition of norms that pass judgment (standards of governance) is a process of "learning to be." Norms are not learned, but acquired. He argued that the observance, "first comes the rule, then its application", "virtually never describes what occurs whenever normation has been achieved" (p. 48). It would only be part of the incomplete process of normation. Using the example of cooperation, Green stated that in normation, "One does not *apply* the norms of cooperation, one simply comes to *be* cooperative. One comes to *be* normed" (p. 49). Participants in this study acknowledged the many "rules" taught in childhood, but recognized that by engaging in a process of "learning to be", the external rules become internal norms.

For Green (1999), "norm acquisition is the bonding of emotions, critical attitude, and the 'caring to be correct'" (p. 41). When describing his normation process, Tommy stated, "I try to incorporate them [beliefs] in how I believe and *feel*." For all participants, the values, morals, and beliefs identified in the narratives embraced a sense of conviction and passion, that is, there is a "bonding of emotion." Participants also demonstrated a critical attitude as understood by Green where, "Critical attitude transforms the rule or norm in question, into a public rule of right" (p. 39). Examples include Janice's no "R" zone, and James' litmus test, "If everyone did what I'm about to do, would that be okay?" Finally, participants also demonstrated a "caring to be correct", by changing their behaviour in order to get it right.

Norm acquisition, according to Green (1999), is only truly detectable when confronting violations, or even anticipating one's own violation, thus provoking some degree of shame, guilt, embarrassment, disapproval, anger, censure, moral rejection, or abhorrence (p. 41). It was on this very point that the recruitment process for my research was designed. A process of self-identification was implemented whereby potential participants were able to identify a behavioural change because of an issue of concern. In this way, I had hoped to find evidence of strong normation and self-correction. The many stories within the narratives did, in fact, contain the reflexive emotions listed above suggesting that indeed there was strong normation. Normation, according to Green, structures the emotions of self-assessment (positive and negative). A narrative, such as Tommy's having overcome feelings of failure and stupidity, indicates a normation process and a restructuring of reflexive emotions.

#### *What are the Voices of Conscience?*

The various stories of moral behaviour pointed to acquired norms that govern. By extension, participants were acting upon "things that matter." This was evident through the passion and conviction revealed in the narratives. Stories of *acts of conscience*, however, were varied and pointed to many different motivations (voices). For Green (1999), conscience speaks in various ways. He wrote, "Sometimes it speaks not of right or wrong, of what is just or unjust, but of what is wise, foolish, or skilful" (p. 3). Thus, reflexive judgment plays a role in a large variety of human activities. Green identified five voices of conscience: (a) craft (performance), (b) membership (attachments), (c) sacrifice (an inclination against self-interest), (d) memory (ancestral promises) and (e) imagination (the community as it ought to be). He suggested that these

are voices that are present at the beginning of life, standing side-by-side throughout life.

As I proceeded through the interviews, I was aware of confusion on my part around the data for *voices of conscience*. In undertaking the analysis, I came to recognize that when I was asking about voices, participants were naming the values, morals, and principles that were guiding them, the *social norms*, as Green (1999) would call them. Participants' narratives spoke about lying, stealing, valuing family, friends, and community, *Do Your Best* and *Be Prepared*, The Ten Commandments, justice and equality, competition and achievement, for the good of the whole, taking responsibility, confession, honesty, mental and physical well-being, self-improvement (self-actualization), work ethic, environmentalism, altruism and sacrifice, laws (drugs and under-age drinking), duty, addictions (alcohol and drugs), faith practices, respect and being non-judgmental, privacy, being courteous ... these were the *voices of conscience*, according to the participants. Participants were not inclined to talk about craft, membership, sacrifice, memory, and imagination. In searching for Green's (1999) *voices*, I realized that I was searching for the motivation embedded in the many norms identified. Although motivation was a theme for which questions had been formulated, I was seeking in them the notion of "sacred" (as defined by Green) (1999) not *voices*. In the analyses, I came to recognize that it was motivation that pointed to the *voices of conscience*, voices that Green suggested point to where there is awe, reverence, or mystery.

The data demonstrated that for these participants, conscience is indeed not a single voice, but a complex process, engaging multiple voices, sometimes even "quarrelling" voices, as coined by Green (1999). The voice of *craft* was one voice found

in the narratives revealing a strong work ethic, achievement, and competition. The voice of *membership* was prominent in all the narratives: the strong attachment and loyalty to family, friends, the global community, and even the Disney culture. The conscience of *sacrifice* was a voice heard in the concerns about consumerism and the advocacy of thrift. Going beyond self-interest was evident in narratives that took into consideration other individuals, such as being courteous, giving over to the “masses”, and putting others first. *Memory* was evident in references to such things as The Ten Commandments and the motto *Be Prepared*. However, even the unknown voice heard in comments like, “I don’t know why”, could be pointing to the *voice of memory*. Laws, and the dos and don’ts that in some narratives had the power of self-governance, could reflect any of the voices of membership, sacrifice, or memory. Finally, the conscience of *imagination* was perhaps the voice behind the visionary desire to look at the “bigger picture” and to examine consequences, as Green (1999) stated, to “measure the present against what imagination proclaims would be the character of our community if our community were all that it ought to be” (p. 27).

In the narratives, there was a strong thread of the importance of the *other-than-self*. Concern for the “bigger picture” and what’s good for all, as well as putting others first, suggested an understanding of the *other-than-self* is a necessary component of conscience formation. This may be a given in Green’s (1999) treatise. In order for judgment to be “reflexive”, the self must be compared to some “other.” Prudence, that is “wisdom of foresight turned to the preservation of self interest” is, Green argues, the threshold of morality (p. 89). Green sought to restore the classical Greek notion of prudence by asking Socrates’ question, “How ought I to live?”

Among the narratives, there was a strong understanding that the participants' moral behaviour currently looks very different from that of their childhood. There was notably a formative shift out of childhood which accompanied the development of their consciences. Participants understood their childhood moral behaviour as being primarily obedience to external authority. In childhood, they were given the dos and don'ts. Now in young adulthood, participants recognized that *experience* is a key component to development. Life and life-decisions become "bigger" and more complex with chronological development and essentially cognitive development. Some participants also recognized the *particularity* of conscience formation, as indicated by Green (1999), that is, where "ethical considerations are rooted in one's peculiar station or role." The process of development generally came with identity formation, the capacity to see "the whole picture", and the capacity to feel responsibility and accountability. It is not just a cognitive capacity, but an emotional connection with the whole.

Although there is development in conscience formation, Green (1999) argued that there is no developmental sequence, rather voices "side by side" that become "more incisive, more rational, more passionate, more expansive in scope" (p. 61). All participants acknowledged multiple, even "quarrelling" voices, as discussed by Green. In some narratives, evidence is also found of a developed conscience, where quarrels continue and are even "cultivated, deepened, and elaborated" (p. 29). References made by participants to refining morals, considering consequences, using foresight, and considering the other/whole, all support the notion of a developing conscience.

*What Reflexive Emotions are Dominant, or More Developed, in Conscience Formation?*

Evidence of reflexive emotions, for Green (1999), is a criterion for conscience formation. With the experience of attachment there is also the experience of “moral emotions”: guilt, shame, anxiety, embarrassment, fear, sorrow and even pain, as well as, elation, pride, and self-assurance. “Such feelings are a part of moral knowledge” (p. 11). Participants were first made aware of their moral emotions, typically, by the discomfort (dis-ease) felt in a situation. For some, it was even a physical reaction, feeling “almost sick.” For all participants, discomfort triggered an awareness of the accompanying moral emotions such as: feeling “bad”, stressed, guilty, uncomfortable, fearful, and frustrated.

It was not exclusively, however, negative feelings associated with a moment of conscience. For the research participants it was also a feeling of “self-gratification”, self-acceptance, and happiness. These feelings are not as notable or memorable as the more uncomfortable ones, but they, too, indicate conscience at work.

Reflexive emotions, where “the self renders an estimate of the self” are structured by normation (Green, 1999, p. 119). Not all emotions experienced by participants are reflexive. Some of the emotions are the very core, nonreflexive emotions of the primal experience; emotions such as fear, hope, and joy. However, it is in the reflexive emotions that development is revealed. The identified emotion of self-acceptance might point to a more developed conscience, as might the term “self-gratification” or “altruism” that one participant had used when he had struggled to name the positive feelings associated with a good conscience.

Some participants described childhood as a time of no worries, no stress, and no choice, where emotions are different, where “emotions don’t affect you as much.” It is

perhaps the reflexive emotions that do “affect you.” Some participants did, however, recall the reflexive emotion of guilt, even in childhood, recognized it and self-corrected their behaviour. This would support Green’s (1999) treatise that conscience and its voices are there from the beginning.

The cognitive capacity to engage in reason appeared almost to be absent when conscience is experienced as an intuitive reaction from the gut. It is here perhaps that it must be remembered that for Green (1999), moral emotions are reflexive, that is, they are the emotions of self-assessment. They are the emotions bonded to the cognitive awareness of departure from what the norm requires. This again indicates that there is no distinction in normation between the cognitive and the affective. Moral emotions, experienced as *gut feelings*, indicate the activity of the cognitive/affective process of conscience.

#### *How Does the Sacred Define “Things That Matter”?*

Green (1999) defined sacred as that which provokes “awe or reverence or stirring a sense of mystery....it is something hidden, distant, and powerful” (p. 113). He added, however, “It is not my aim to say what things are sacred and what things are not....Almost anything can be and at some time or other probably has been regarded as sacred” (p. 112).

In general, I was challenged to let the participants speak from their thoughts and not be directed too much by the questions themselves, and specifically the wording of the questions; not to make them too “leading”, especially if I decided to add some follow-up questions. In some cases follow-up questions addressed directly what the participant had just said, in other cases it was to redirect the response to the intention of the original

question. This was particularly true for the research question, “How does the sacred define ‘things that matter’?” Looking back, how the question was introduced into the process and the language used was not consistent across interviews nor with the Focus Group, and, therefore, the data would have to be interpreted with that awareness.

For the interviews, I asked, “Why do you think your (values, morals, principals) have this power to affect your behaviour? That is, what makes them so important?” Understanding the sacred was varied and, for some, challenging. Often there was a puzzled look or pause when the word “sacred” was used. Spirituality was a notion with which some participants were more familiar and comfortable. Likewise, for the Focus Group, there was some pause before responding to the question, “Where was spirituality, or the ‘sacred’ in each of the voices?” For some participants it was not hard to know there was a spiritual element to the *voices of conscience*, but they could not necessarily know why. The various responses had to do with being in community, connecting with the “whole”, and feeling right with their conscience.

There was located within some of the narratives the awe, reverence, or mystery which Green (1999) suggested motivates conscience. The deep *love* for the environment Becky experienced, the powerful connecting with others at church that Beth sought, the inspiration and excitement that Peter spoke of, and Tommy’s deep devotion to his faith, all point to awe, reverence, and mystery. Becky summarized this point by saying that for her conscience is “the connecting with things that are most important.”

In my Literature Review, as a summary to an exploration of the sacred I wrote, There are four foundational points that can be made here which frame this thesis with regards to the sacred:



1. That everyone has an innate need to bring meaning to their life. In doing so they accept, adapt or formulate a belief-system.
2. Even an atheist, a Stoic, or a non believer establishes a belief-system of meanings, the essence of which is “things that matter”.
3. When something becomes important to the individual, it speaks to their connectedness to the whole, the mystery, the unknown, that is more than, or beyond, the individual.
4. The experience of reverence, accountability, and responsibility for the whole takes on moral and ethical overtones, compelling people to virtuous behaviours.

(pp. 50-51)

Reading this now that the research is completed and the data analyzed, I feel confident that these four points are reflected in the findings.

In addition, from the narratives for both the interviews and Focus Group, a positive self-esteem was an important piece of conscience formation. The esteeming of the self, respecting self, was a component of a good conscience. The sacred was also within the self, or, put another way, the self was also sacred, the self was important. The paradox is that this is not a selfish, individualistic position so commonly criticized in today's society. Developing a conscience is an internal process whose outcomes demonstrate an acute sense of commitment and responsibility to the “other-than-self.”

Gathering together the above thoughts, for the participants of this research, the sacred is found in what is important to them, and does point to awe, reverence, and mystery, but it also points to union (connecting) and the self.

*Is There an "Other" Voice Not Bound By Normation and Prudence?*

Green (1999) argued that moral education, among other things, is education in strong normation. "Conscience is shaped only within some membership and for the sake of life within the membership so formed" (p. 70). I was left with the question, "Do all voices of conscience come from normation, that is, from attachment to community and prudential consideration?" The questions put to participants attempted to identify the norms that govern and, through the norms, identify the voices of conscience. I wondered if all norms could be tagged to one or more of the voices, or if there was still a gap, an "other" voice not bound by normation. Some participants disclosed that they did not know why certain behavioural changes occurred. This may reflect the mystery of the sacred, or it might point to another (unnamed) voice.

The purpose in my examination of the *sacred* (admittedly through a lens formed within a Christian background) was not necessarily to look only at why the participants' acquired values, morals, and beliefs (norms) were so important, but even to question if the sacred, or spiritual, was indeed a voice of its own. This was, in fact, a question I had pondered, and put aside, when first contemplating Green's (1999) thesis. If I understand it correctly, Green's treatise suggested that it is only by virtue of being important enough to determine behaviour, that something--anything--could be sacred. For Green, there is no critical examination of why what is important is important, except to say that this is where you will find the sacred. By locating sacred in the experiencing of moral horror, awe, and reverence, Green does not pursue the debate on goodness as so many have done before him since the great Greek philosophers, and as so many continue to do. For Green, altruism is found within the voices of sacrifice or membership, or even

imagination, craft, and memory. The voice of imagination fundamentally implies the best of character “if our community were all that it ought to be” (p. 27). The whole debate about “absolutes” is conveniently avoided when the philosophy of moral education is not focused on *what* is important, but essentially the process of moral behaviour (reflexive judgment).

If conscience is only in the context of “the other” than consideration for the other must play out. The notion of goodness does creep into all great treatises on moral behaviour, including Green’s (1999). He wrote, “The aim of moral education is that beyond good reasons we have good conduct and good character” (p. 115). He also noted that in a democratic society, the aim of moral education is for good citizenship, as well as governance of behaviour. Research participants also indicated a concern for the common good. Becky’s capacity, at the age of only 4 or 5 years old, to demonstrate reflexive judgment even when no one else knew of her error, and then corrected her behaviour because, “what if other kids want to play, what if they don’t have enough loonies”, points to the power of normation in early childhood. Or, it points to still another voice not formed by normation. It might point to *good will*.

In a study of the moral exemplars, Walker (1999) found the attributes of conscientiousness and agreeableness “particularly salient” for the moral exemplar. This, perhaps, indicates that across history, and across cultures, and across religions, there are possibly some (universal) absolutes. In the mystery of the sacred there might be absolutes. In the least, we know that there is an enduring pursuit of absolutes. Although in Chapter One I suggested this study is not about absolutes, the tendency to let interpretation go this way is still compelling! If indeed another *voice of conscience* can

be discerned, it might be the *voice of absolutes*, or the *voice of good will*; a voice beyond the mystery of imagination, because it is a voice beyond normation, it is a voice that is prudential only in that a clear conscience demands it.

### Chapter Summary

From a broad perspective my research findings supported Green's (1999) treatise on conscience formation. Participants indicated that they thought of conscience (what governs their moral behaviour) as an internal process of determining right from wrong (reflexive judgment) about important life experiences (things that matter). Their consciences were formed in the context of intimate relationships where values, morals, and beliefs were presented and "put on" as one's second nature (normation). Typically, conscience was accompanied by gut feelings of discomfort (reflexive emotions) compelling them into action to correct or to change moral behaviour. It was not uncommon for the participants to experience multiple, even conflicting values, morals, or beliefs (norms), rooted in their intimate communities, altruistic nature, visions for justice, striving for excellence, etc. (voices). Experiences of conscience leading to feeling good about oneself, and fulfilled, were also reported. Participant narratives indicated there may be a critical path in conscience formation pivotal on cognitive development and the individualization of human development. For these participants, that included a consideration for, and even accountability to, the "other-than-self" and the bigger picture. Findings also supported Green's (1999) argument that the voices of conscience are there from the beginning. Specifically, there were narratives that demonstrated strong normation and self-correction even at a very young age.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter provides a summary of the preceding chapters followed by a discussion regarding the implications of the findings, with the intent being to reconstrue the transformative usefulness of conscience in moral education. The discussion is confined by the perimeters as established in Chapter One, therefore, the ideas explored are necessarily limited in scope and development. This, by no means, is intended to minimize the potential pervasiveness of conscience in future enquiry, but only to manage the current discussion.

### Summary

Chapter One introduced the topic *conscience formation* and laid out my research goal to “revise our very vocabulary for thinking about moral education” (Green, 1999, p. 1). In the first chapter I established my research within the framework of the treatise of conscience formation as proposed by Thomas Green (1985, 1999). By choosing Green’s work, I chose to pursue a philosophical approach to moral education, not a moral philosophy. The rational, scope, and assumptions to my research were identified.

In Chapter Two I established conscience in its historical framework, intentionally setting the perimeters for a topic that has primarily been lost in the shadows of the much broader fields of moral philosophy and moral development. I touched on related work to demonstrate the persistence and growing pervasiveness of conscience within the historical fields of philosophy, theology, and psychology, and now emerging across multiple other domains, such as neuroscience economics. Chapter Two laid a theoretical foundation that supports a revision of the vocabulary for moral education.

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology that was used for the study. The theoretical background was identified and the research phases were laid out. Ethical considerations, methodological assumptions, and limitations were explored.

Chapter Four presented the data analysis collected from four One-to-One Interviews and a Focus Group. Findings are summarized by the themes identified in the research objectives. The chapter was divided into three sections: (a) One-to-One Interviews, (b) Focus Group, and (c) Discussion and Interpretation. Generally speaking, research findings support the fundamental premises of Green's (1999) treatise on *The Educational Formation of Conscience*.

### **Educational Implications and Future Research Questions**

In our democratic society, the issue of good citizenship and governing behaviour surfaces continually as we become increasingly multicultural, multifait, and nonreligious. Society's numerous communities each have their own unique pool of values, morals, and beliefs. Furthermore, rapid advancements in technology expose all, so that no community or moral code is protected from examination, or from potential misunderstanding. At its best, confusion abounds with competing messages, and at its worst, frustration and defensiveness turns into conflicted behaviours. Efforts to strengthen the moral codes are lost in the failure to understand the philosophy of moral education. Educational efforts are instead typically focused on moral philosophy. This thesis has supported the belief that "a philosophy of moral education must aim to understand the nature of moral learning" (Green, 1999, p. 17). The problem in this study was to examine conscience formation as a meaningful and viable framework for moral education.

Although Lawrence Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development presented a philosophy of moral education, critics suggested it overemphasized cognition. It also established a stage theory that is hierarchal, and does not account for particularity. Kohlberg did, however, propose a theory where "principles of conscience" indicated full development, evident only in Stages Five and Six. Nevertheless, Kohlberg (1984) only spoke of conscience as equivalent to the "Superego", and primarily associated with guilt and shame.

A modest review of the literature indicates that since the time of Ancient Greek philosophy, conscience - a natural disposition - has been understood as essential to good conduct and the means to a good life. This study took the position that there is no other single psychological function that can substitute for conscience. Conscience governs behaviour. The purpose of this study was to use individual narratives and group dialogue to reconstrue the transformative usefulness of conscience in moral education, and to establish a revised vocabulary where moral education is understood as the formation of conscience. Thomas Green (1999) in his treatise, *Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience*, presented an argument for moral education which located conscience formation as central to moral development, going far beyond the confines of the modern sense of morality.

I am convinced that for effective educational initiatives, a philosophy of moral education, not a moral philosophy, must provide the theoretical framework. Only then can curriculum outcomes break away from a focus on vague, over-played, ideal character traits, and focus instead on the tools for living, that is, conscience formation. Conscience bridges the judgment-action gap. It validates reflexive judgment, the role of moral

emotions, and the cognitive/affective bond of reflexive emotions. I am convinced that Green's revised vocabulary of moral education, which incorporates the terminology of conscience formation, is an innovative and promising approach to educational initiatives. But the question remains, would a new approach be achievable?

I would not attempt to say definitively why conscience has not gained (or retained) a prominent place in the language of moral development. Probable reasons include: (a) its lingering association with guilt--an uncomfortable reflexive emotion (b) the persistent strong Roman Catholic connection, as well as a connection with any formal religion, and (c) society's fear of individualization--"selfhood"--with its focus on freedom, intelligence and fallibility, and its appearance to be working at odds with governing group behaviours.

Nevertheless, my research findings provide evidence that a *consciousness of conscience* is still active in the minds of youth, and still mirrors many of the fundamental principles of conscience that have persevered throughout history. The dual nature of conscience (existing standards and passing judgement) established since the time of primitive cultures, prevails. Where evolution is evident, is in the shedding of the notion that the *standards* come from an external authority, and in the diminishing of the almost obsessive focus on guilt as the exclusive indicator of *passing judgment*. Moral discourse continues to seek a better understanding of such issues as reasoning, truth, and absolutes, emotions, goodness, and happiness, as discussed in the Literature Review, and as revealed in the research narratives. Further questions I am left with are: Where is the division between knowledge-based reasoning and the intuitive reasoning (reflexive



judgment) of conscience? And, how does intuitive reasoning develop (or change), with the critical development of conscience, specifically, through reflexive emotions?

We know conscience through its voices. Discerning those voices from within the research narratives was not easy. Typically, voices did not stand apart from each other, but were blended. Again, further questions I am left with are: What is the educational value in distinguishing individual voices? What other voices are speaking to us? And, how fluid are the voices? Are they like Neil Postman's (1996) god narratives, which he suggests should always be tested for falsehood? With the 2008-2009 crisis on Wall Street, it would appear that, for many, the lessons from excessive profit seeking behaviour, have not been learned. The mandate to maximize the profit line for investors remains the only motivation. Is this a *voice of craft* out of control? Or is it the absence of conscience altogether, where the "horror" of the industry's activity does not register at all?

The implications of my research findings for initiatives in moral education are broad. In the remainder of this closing chapter I can only begin to address a few of them. First, any educational initiative will require the re-entry of the term, conscience, into common language. As already discussed, this may prove to be a challenge even if just because of its current out-of-use status. It will also prove challenging to rebalance the focus away from the center stage of conscience that guilt and duty has dominated. Given the persistent nature of the notion throughout history, and its transformative usefulness for moral education, the challenge is perhaps not insurmountable.

More concerning is Green's (1999) premise that the intimate communities needed for strong normation to occur, are shrinking in a society that is considered by some to be

imbalanced towards individual autonomy and personal choice. The shrinking of intimate, formative moral communities and the separation between the public and private spheres of life, a kind of privatization of morality (Green, 1999, p. 79) gives fodder to Lehmann's (1963) belief that conscience is on the decline. Green argued that strong normation is likely to be confined increasingly to those relationships whose nature intrinsically requires it, and that such relations are seldom found in anything that we would call public. The question then becomes, what role, realistically and practically, can schools play in the educational formation of conscience? In the United States of America, Haynes (2009) argues that schools should be "the laboratories for acts of conscience" (p. 11). He stated,

The freedom to follow what the framers of the U.S. Constitution described as 'the dictates of conscience' is a precious, fundamental right founded on the inviolable dignity of the individual. That's why liberty of conscience is often called our "first freedom. (p. 9)

For Haynes, advocating for educational formation of conscience is advocating for the first amendment.

Green (1999) argued that it is the "member" which is the important unit of consideration for conscience formation. For this reason, membership in a public educational institution (school) is an environment where formation can be nurtured. Schools typically do not achieve the level of intimacy and attachment needed by students for strong normation. However, some do. Similarly, schools currently are also not always successful in building good citizenship and governing behaviour, and may, in

fact, contribute to the weakening of social norms. Perhaps the time is right for conscience to be restored in human awareness and in educational initiatives.

The educational environment of schools can facilitate the reflective process that would identify, deepen, elaborate, and cultivate voices of conscience. For Green (1999), what is needed is a “curriculum of moral skills” which is not focused on compliance, obedience, and observance, but which attends to “the practice” of employing empathy, weighing different interests, and offering proposals for improvement. This reflective process might even resemble the parent directed exercise one participant recalled,

I remember in grade 8, I snuck out and then I got caught ... I was grounded, but the main punishment was I had to write a list of what I wanted to be when I was older, the steps I would take and how I would become what I wanted to do when I was older, and also how my actions hurt other people. I think just them [parents] getting me to write that out was the best way to deal with it because it made me think, rather than just getting upset with me and being grounded; I actually thought it through. (Becky)

Schools, however, can do more than just attempt to facilitate the “learning about” conscience formation; schools can intentionally be a player in conscience formation by becoming a normative community. The effectiveness of engaging students in reflective learning can be better served in a normative community where there is attachment and trust. The process of normation will need to be an intentional, pervasive activity across all elements of the school culture; a community where attachment and trust must be established (conscience of membership). This includes attending to hidden curriculum, as there, too, normation is found. It also requires that, according to Green (1999), the

moral language in a school should change from the first person singular ("I" and "me") to the first person plural ("we" and "us"). In order for a school to become a normative community, it would need to have in its "being" operative norms that govern. There is still much that can be examined regarding the establishing of normative communities in public education.

There is a significant exception to the absence of conscience in school curriculum, and that is in the Roman Catholic educational system where conscience is already deeply established in doctrine and passed on through religious education classes. For this reason, any attempt to establish conscience formation, untied from Roman Catholicism, may be challenging.

My research findings suggest that students are receptive to an opportunity to examine the notion of conscience, and even to engage in a reflective process of examining their own consciences. I may have had exceptional people, the "exemplars", as participants in my study, since self-identifying was a selection criterion. Green has suggested that the *voice of imagination* was the most difficult voice to develop. Yet, I believe there was evidence of this voice in the research narratives. Perhaps the majority of youth are not as ready to engage in examining their conscience as the study participants were. The true risk, however, is not to do so, and to see the current tendencies for weak formation and poor governance continue.

Conscience is reflexive judgment. That is, it is judgment that each one of us makes in our own case. Formation of conscience respects the individual. Individuality has been neglected, even avoided, for the more pressing goal of controlling group behaviour. The paradox is, however, that the two cannot be separated. And, only

through the individualization of a moral identity will there be evidence of behaviour that serves the collective good. The individualization of conscience formation embraces freedom, intelligence and fallibility, and it is an education in social criticism. As Green (1999) indicated, good behaviour should not be at the expense of “sacrificing the critical capacity to appraise behaviour...or reducing conduct to the routines of unthinking habit” (p. 8). This is where I believe there might also be resistance or mistrust in conscience formation initiatives. In conscience formation, curriculum is not the controlling of moral behaviour, but the development of *good will*. My research findings suggest that with individualization there was also evidence of strong self esteem *and* a caring for the other-than-self. Narratives indicate that participants do care about the bigger picture, justice, fairness, and a good society. It was not uncommon to hear a participant pair the notion what is the right thing to do, with what is also a good thing to do. Conscience formation, therefore, may also be a *curriculum of good will*.

For the participants in this research, the recognition of “gut feelings” as the source of authority was a strong theme with regards to a developing conscience. Conscience bonds cognition with affect. Reflexive emotions are emotions of self-assessment, feelings that serve the binding force of self-judgment. Nonreflexive emotions, such as fear, hope, and joy, along with reflexive emotions, “assume a prominent position in any full exposition of moral education” (Green, 1999, p. 26). The cultivation, deepening, and elaboration of the voices of conscience engages deeper, more complicated moral emotions, such as gratitude, humility, and integrity. “Gut feelings” needs to be part of the new common language associated with conscience formation.

Another challenge to any educational initiative for conscience formation is the

religious association tied to the terms, “sacred” and “spirituality”. Although in our Western society, mainstream Christianity is declining, research indicates that the notion of “spirituality” is very prevalent among youth (Tacey, 2004); a spirituality that is more interested in listening to the “inward conscience.” It is not the notion of “spirituality” that should be feared, but the “banal, the ordinary, the mundane” that fill the void of the absent sacred. Spirituality, too, might require a “revised vocabulary” to better reflect its relationship with conscience. Tacey argues that the reliance on conscience by his students, he found, is “a product of modernity and the democratic principles inherent in contemporary society” (p.80). Spirituality too needs to address the same modernization.

Because of the selection criteria, the participants in my research had a faith base to their moral development. Yet, they did not speak about a deity or advocate for a defined religion. Neither did the participants identify the sacred explicitly as a source of awe, wonder, and mystery, as Green (1999) suggested. There were narratives that spoke of connecting, inspiration, and even self-love. The sacred was difficult for some research participants to articulate, but had something to do with self-respect and the experience of the union of the self to a deeper self, and to the other-than-self. One reviewer of Green’s (1999) treatise concluded, “Thomas Green's masterful balancing of the many tensions in moral education rests on the idea that sacredness--both immanent and transcendent--is not only necessary but also central to the acquisition of norms” (Alexander, 2000, p. 400). I am left with the questions: Is the sacred only about that which triggers “awe and reverence or stirring a sense of mystery... something hidden, distant, and powerful” (Green, 1999, p. 113)? Or, is the “ordinary” also where the sacred is found? And, is experiencing “union with” the object of awe, reverence and mystery, the real key to the

sacred? I like the notion of the “soul of the world”, accredited to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian philosopher, Giordano Bruno (n.d.). Although he was referring to the Holy Spirit, I believe it can also describe the other-than-self. I propose that, *experiencing “union” with the “soul of the world”* is perhaps another approach to the sacred. For those willing to go that far, a curriculum of conscience formation might also be a *curriculum of the sacred*.

### **A Model of Conscience Formation**

The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.

(Albert Einstein)

As previously discussed, my research leaves me with the question: Is there a critical path in conscience formation; a path where reflexive emotions become “more incisive, more rational, more passionate, more perceptive, more discerning, and more expansive in their scope” (Green, 1999 p. 61)?

Figure 2 offers a visual depiction of this possible extension of Green’s (1999) theory. At the center is the primal experience, where nonreflexive emotions reside (fear, hope, wonder, joy). This is depicted with three linking circles, symbolizing movement and fluidity. Where the circles overlap there is darkness to denote the depth of the unknown, the place where mystery resides. It is from this core, from the beginning, that the voices of conscience emerge as intuition and gut feelings, manifested as feelings such as guilt, pride, embarrassment, and shame. These voices speak to each of us about that which is important; about: craft, membership, sacrifice, memory, and imagination. Through life experience and cognitive formation the voices are shaped by normation. The voices are cultivated, elaborated, and deepened, as they engage in reflexive judgment

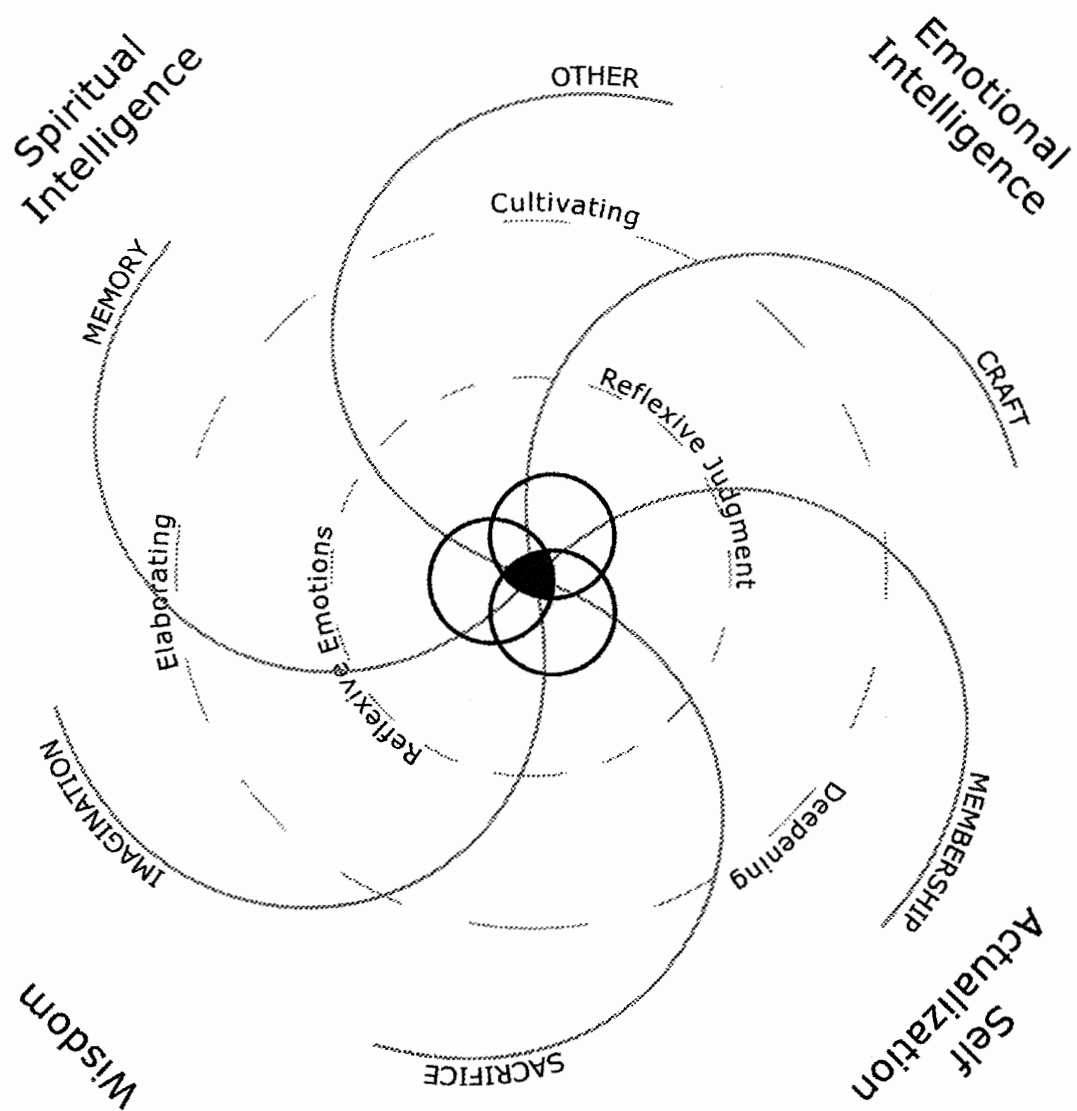


Figure 2. A model of conscience formation.



in partnership with reflexive emotions. These reflexive emotions grow in diversity and complexity, yet they are never out of touch with the primal ones. Emotions like gratitude, humility, regret, compassion, and disgust might be ones indicating a developing conscience. The mature, developed conscience hears the voices in a symphony, fighting for their place in a collective expression, sometimes coming together in unison and exemplary moral behaviour. They are free, however, to break away again, called back into the “more” (James, 1929), the other, into mystery. It is in the symphony where one’s community witnesses full development akin to wisdom, self-actualization, to emotional or to spiritual intelligence. Here we get closest to *knowing* truth, while also *knowing that we are still far from knowing* truth.

### **Related Research**

As indicated in my model, I am suggesting that a developed or mature conscience has many similar attributes to that of Maslow’s (1972) stage of self-actualization in his hierarchy of needs theory, Goleman’s Theory of Emotional Intelligence (1998), and Fowler’s (1995) theory of Faith Development. Although not a stage theory with a developmental sequence, Green (1999) does address development. Future research in conscience formation will need to continue to look at commonalities with these and other developmental theories. How conscience formation contributes to the research in Spiritual Intelligence (Emmons, 2000), Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence (Gardner, 1995, 2000), or the field of the Neuroscience of Emotions (Keltner, Horberg, & Oveis, 2006), would also be interesting to pursue.

In Chapter One, I suggested that as a subject term, conscience, has not stood on its own, but is embedded (to various degrees) in the topics of ethics and morality. While

completing my research, I have discovered yet another branch of research that looks very much like conscience formation, but without ever using the term. Leffel (2008) presents a model of “moral motivation” that highlights the role played by moral intuitions, moral emotions, and moral virtues. He references heavily the work of Haidt (2001) on moral emotions and the social intuitionist model of moral judgment (SIM). Leffel expands Haidt’s original model and creates a linear, six domain (source) “complex causal chain leading from sociomoral perception to action” (p. 197). Leffel shares in common with Green (1999) the emphasis on moral motivation and the “internal sense which does not require extensive moral deliberation or reflexive awareness” (p. 182). The conviction that moral emotions are essential to understanding moral judgment is also common to both theories. However, where Green intentionally stands apart from any explicit religious doctrine, Leffel’s efforts intentionally interface with the psychology of religion, and with contemporary philosophical and theological ethics. Leffel acknowledges that moral motivation is a topic that “until quite recently has been relatively neglected by researchers” (p. 184). His own research goal is to theorize the relevance of moral motivation with “spiritual transformation”. I am somewhat concerned by the fact that conscience is not even mentioned in Leffel’s work when there is so much conceptual similarity. Also, by using the language of moral motivation, the emphasis is once again taken away from the “action” piece. Does this research indicate the continued “fall of conscience”, as Paul Lehmann first coined it in 1963? There is an obvious need to explore further where Green’s and Leffel’s work intersect, and where they part. For now, my own research confirms Green’s treatise and gives credence to his bold and striking stance for conscience formation.

My preliminary review of Leffel's (2008) work reminds me of the challenge that future cross-disciplinary research will have. It will be very difficult to account for all emerging enquiries, and the integrity each holds for its own specific approach. I am aware, however, that historically, psychologists did not necessarily talk to theologians, but they did, at times, talk theologically. Likewise, theologians did not talk to psychologists, but they did talk about psychology. This is true, of course, across other disciplines, which now include neuroscience. There is clearly active interest in cross-discipline academic research, and this leaves me hopeful.

### **Closing Comments**

Through the course of my research, I have come to recognize that as research advances in moral development and moral behaviour, the notion of conscience is very much embedded in many disciplines. The breadth of research available that indirectly speaks to conscience is overwhelming, particularly with regard to *goodness*. I recognize, however, that Green's (1999) vocabulary of conscience formation does offer a way of pulling together these various threads of research. More importantly, it provides a framework for an educational formation of conscience that breaks free from moral philosophy, insofar as it attends to the *motivation* for goodness. I believe that the notion of the sacred is the key; the paradoxical union of the sacred self, with the sacred other - a pedagogy of the sacred.

## References

- Alexander, H. (2000). Education and the sacred: Thomas Green's educational formation of conscience. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 34(2), 395-400.
- Alexander, H., & Ben-Peretz, M. (2001). Toward a pedagogy of the sacred: Transcendence, ethics, and the curriculum. In J. Erricker, C. Ota, & C. Erricker (Eds.), *Spiritual education, cultural, religious and social differences: New perspectives for the twenty first century* (pp. 34-47). Brighton, Sussex: Academic Press.
- Anosiki, J. E. (2000). *Formation of conscience: A moral theological problem*. New York: P. Lang.
- Ariely, D. (interviewee). (2009, March 24). Behavioural economics [Radio interview]. In P. Bertrand (Executive Producer), *The Current*. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Bowler, S. M. (2002). *The Protestant conscience in Ontario education*. Unpublished master's project, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.
- Boyd, D. (1989). The character of moral development. In Nucci (Ed.) *Moral Development and Character Education* (pp. 95-123). Berkley Calif: McCutchan Pub. Corp.
- Bruno, G. (n.d.) Retrieved May 6, 2010, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giordano\\_Bruno](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giordano_Bruno)
- Buber, M. (1973). Guilt and guilt feelings. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 224-237). New York: Newman Press.

- Carr, D. (1995). Towards a distinctive conception of spiritual education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 21(1), 83.
- Cousins, E. H. (1973). The mature Christian conscience. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 143-154). New York: Newman Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Curran, C. E. (1966). *Christian morality today; The renewal of moral theology*. Notre Dame, IN: Fides.
- Curran, C. E. (1973). The Christian conscience today. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 132-142). New York: Newman Press.
- Dewey, J. (1976). *The middle works, 1899-1924*. Carbondale, IL: University Press.
- Dewey, J., & Tufts, J. H. (1908). *Ethics*. New York: Holt.
- Diller, A. (2003). A review of Thomas F. Green, 1999, voices: The educational formation of conscience. *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, 22(6), 513-519.
- Dukas, H., & Hoffman, B. (1979). *Albert Einstein, the human side*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Einstien, A. (n.d.) Retrieved April 17, 2010, from <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/alberteins109022.html>
- Emmons, R. A. (2000). Is spirituality an intelligence? Motivation, cognition, and the psychology of ultimate concern. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(1), 3-26.

- Erikson, E. (1963). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Flores, G. (2007). Emotional morality. *Scientific American Mind*, 18(3), 9-9.
- Forman, D. R., Aksan, N., & Kochanska, G. (2004). Toddlers' responsive imitation predicts preschool-age conscience. *Psychological Science*, 15(10), 699-704.
- Fowler, J. W. (1995). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning* (1st Harper pbk ed.). San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Freire, P. (2008). Paulo Freire. In T. W. Johnson, & R. F. Reed (Eds.), *Philosophical documents in education* (3rd ed.; pp. 204-217). Boston, MA: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.
- Frimer, J. A., & Walker, L. J. (2008). Towards a new paradigm of moral personhood. *Journal of Moral Education*, 37(3), 333-356.
- Gairdner, W. D. (2008). *The book of absolutes: A critique of relativism and a defence of universals*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Gardner, H. (1995). Reflections on multiple intelligences. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77(3), 200.
- Gardner, H. (2000). A case against spiritual intelligence. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(1), 27-34.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gino, F., Ayal, S., & Ariely, D. (2009). Contagion and differentiation in unethical behavior: The effect of one bad apple on the barrel. *Psychological Science*, 20(3), 393-398.
- Glaser, J. W. (1973). Conscience and superego: A key distinction. In C. E. Nelson (Ed), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 167-188). New York: Newman Press.
- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

- Gray, J. (2007). *Black mass apocalyptic religion and the death of utopi*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.
- Green, M. (2008). Maxime Green. In T. W. Johnson, & R. F. Reed, (Eds.), *Philosophical documents in education* (3rd ed.; pp. 146-163). Boston, Pearson Allyn and Bacon.
- Green, T. F. (1985). The formation of conscience in an age of technology. *American Journal of Education*, 94(1; 1), 1-32.
- Green, T. F. (1999). *Voices: The educational formation of conscience*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Haynes, C. C. (2009). Schools of conscience. *Educational Leadership*, 66(8), 6-13.
- Huitt, W. (2004). *Moral and character education*. Retrieved January 24, 2005 from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/morchr/morchr.html>.
- James, W. (1929). *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature; being the Gifford lectures on natural religion delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902*. New York: Modern Library.
- James, W. (2005). The will to believe. In J. M. Capps, & D. Capps (Eds.), *James & Dewey* (pp. 95-110). Chicago, IL: University of Illinois.
- Johnson, T. W., & Reed, R. F. (2008). *Philosophical documents in education* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon.
- Kant, I. (1963). (L. Infield, Trans.; J. B. Schneewind, Ed.). *Lectures on ethics*. Indianapolis, MN: Hackett. (Original work published 1780).
- Kaufmann, M. (2003). A review of Thomas F. Green, 1999, voices: The educational formation of conscience. *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, 22(6), 497-506.

- Keltner, D., Horberg, E., & Oveis, C. (2006). Emotional intuitions and moral play. *Social Justice Research, 19*(2), 208-217.
- Kohlberg, L. (1972). A cognitive-developmental approach to moral education. *Humanist, 32*, 13-16.
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Kristeva, J. (2007). Rethinking “normative conscience”. *Common Knowledge, 13*(2), 219-226.
- Leffel, G. M. (2008). Who cares? Generativity and the moral emotions, Part 2: A “social intuitionist model” of moral motivation. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 36*(3), 182-201.
- Lehmann, P. L. (1963). *Ethics in a christian context*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Levine, S. (1999). Children’s cognition as the foundation of spirituality. *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality, 4*(2), 121.
- Lipman, M. (2008). Matthew Lipman. In T. W. Johnson, & R. F. Reed, (Eds.), *Philosophical documents in education* (3rd ed.; pp. 250-272). Boston, MA: Pearson Allyn, & Bacon.
- Macquarrie, J. (1970). *Three issues in ethics*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Maslow, A. H. (1972). *Religions, values, and peak-experiences*. New York: Viking Press.
- Mead, N. L., Baumeister, R. F., Gino, F., Schweitzer, M. E., & Ariely, D. (2009). Too tired to tell the truth: Self-control resource depletion and dishonesty. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*(3), 594-597.



- Mortimer, R.C. (1973). An Anglo-Catholic view of conscience. In C. E. Nelson (Ed),  
*Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 123-131). New York:  
 Newman Press.
- Noddings, N. (1993). *Educating for intelligent belief or unbelief*. New York: Teachers  
 College, Columbia University.
- Noddings, N. (2008). Nell Noddings. In T. W. Johnson, & R. F. Reed (Eds.),  
*Philosophical documents in education* (3rd ed.; pp. 218-232). Boston, MA: Pearson  
 Allyn, & Bacon.
- Obama, B. (2006). *2006 call to renewal keynote speech*. Retrieved (May 4, 2010) from  
[http://usliberals.about.com/od/faithinpubliclife/a/ObamaReligion\\_4.htm](http://usliberals.about.com/od/faithinpubliclife/a/ObamaReligion_4.htm).
- Otto, R. (1958). *The idea of the holy: An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea  
 of the divine and its relation to the rational* (2nd ed.). London: Oxford University  
 Press.
- Oxford Universal Dictionary (1933). London: Oxford University Press.
- Palmer, P. J. (1983). *To know as we are known: A spirituality of education* (1st ed.). San  
 Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Palmer, P. J. (2008). Parker J. Palmer. In T. W. Johnson, & R. F. Reed (Eds.),  
*Philosophical documents in education* (3rd ed.; pp. 289-311). Boston, MA: Pearson  
 Allyn, & Bacon.
- Pattison, E. M. (1973). The development of moral values in children. In C. E. Nelson  
 (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives*. (pp. 238-262). New  
 York: Newman Press.
- Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgment of the child*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

- Postman, N. (1996). *The end of education: A guest lecture for the classroom*. (Video recording). Northampton, MA.
- Power, C., Hiddins, A., & Kohlberg, L. (1989). The habit of the common life: Building character through democratic community schools. In L. P. Nucci (Ed.) *Moral development and character education: A dialogue* (pp. 125-143). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Rossiter, G. (1996). The moral and spiritual dimension to education: Some reflections on the British experience. *Journal of Moral Education*, 25(2), 201.
- Rudin, J. (1973). A Catholic view of conscience. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 95-114). New York: Newman Press.
- Ryerson, E. (1871). *First lessons in Christian morals, for Canadian families and schools*. Toronto, ON: Copp, Clark & Company.
- Schar, H. (1973). Protestant problems with conscience. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 79-94). New York: Newman Press.
- Sears, R., Macoby, E., & Levin, H. (1973). How conscience is formed. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.) *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 292-309). New York: Newman Press
- Spong, J. (2008). *Lessons from the Obama inauguration*. Retrieved January 21, 2008 from [https://secure.agoramedia.com//manage\\_spong.asp?rd=http://secure.agoramedia.com/story\\_home\\_spong.asp](https://secure.agoramedia.com//manage_spong.asp?rd=http://secure.agoramedia.com/story_home_spong.asp)

- Tacey, D. J. (2004). *The spirituality revolution: The emergence of contemporary spirituality*. London: Brunner-Routledge.
- Tillich, P. (1973a). A conscience above moralism. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 46-61). New York: Newman Press.
- Tillich, P. (1973b). The nature of a liberating conscience. In C. E. Nelson (Ed.), *Conscience: Theological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 62-71). New York: Newman Press.
- Tucker, P. (2009). Reinventing morality. *Futurist*, 43(1), 20-25.
- Vaisey, S., & Smith, C. (2008) Catholic guilt among U.S. teenagers: A research note. *Review of Religious Research*, 49(4), 415-426.
- Walker, L. J. (1999). The perceived personality of moral exemplars. *Journal of Moral Education*, 28(2), 145-162.
- Walker, L. J., & Reimer, K. S. (2006). The relationship between moral and spiritual development. In E. C. Roehlkepartain, et al. (Eds.). *Handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 224-238). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. N. (2000). *SQ :Connecting with our spiritual intelligence* (1st U.S. ed.). New York: Bloomsbury.

## Appendix A

### Glossary of Formation of Conscience Terms

*Conscience*: reflexive judgment about things that matter

*Norms*: empirical mores that take on the role of governance. Norms are situationally specific and subject to revision through time

*Social norms*: paradigmatically rules of 'ought' and 'should'

*Normation*: the acquisition of norms

The attitude that rectitude matters, is a necessary condition for the acquisition of the norm to occur, which is to say, for the very existence of the norm *as a norm*" (p.41). Normation structures the emotions of self assessment (p.26)

*Particularity*: ethical considerations rooted in one's peculiar station or role.

*Reflexive judgment*: judgment that each of us makes in our own case.

*Moral emotions*: the associated feelings that serve the binding force of self judgment.

*Reflexive emotions*: emotions of self assessment, structured by normation

*Sacred*: that which provokes awe or reverence, a stirring of a sense of mystery

*Prudence*: wisdom of foresight turned to the preservation of self interest; is the threshold of morality

## Appendix B

### Focus Group Design and Questions

Purpose: The intent of the Focus Group is to facilitate a general conversation on the topic of conscience with regards to a specific issue that matters.

Participant selection: Selected participants will have self-identified as having experienced a behaviour change or “correction” on an issue that matters and will be invited to share their story. Five to eight participants will be selected for each of the three or four Focus Groups.

Possible topics to be discussed: The conversation of each Focus Group will address one specific issue that matters from those identified through the returned ***Letter of Interest***. These could include: the environment, sexual identity, career pursuits, social membership, military intervention, and social drinking.

Research Objectives: The questions for the Focus Groups should be general and exploratory directing conversation towards the 6 objectives of the study,

1. To what extent is there awareness of the conscience?
2. What are the voices of conscience?
3. What role does normation play in conscience formation?
4. Is there an “other” voice not bound by normation and prudence?
5. What reflective emotions are dominant, or more developed, in conscience formation?
6. How does the sacred define “things that matter”?

Questions should support a dialogue where there is active listening and exploration of the topic of conscience and its formation. Participants will be encouraged to share their own stories using their own words. Green’s terminology will not be advanced at this time. Instead, I will be looking for the inferring of conscience and it’s corresponding (common) language.

#### Outline of session:

Arrival: collect/sign consent forms

Introductions: to each other and session outline

Review of confidentiality, withdrawal, feedback, and available support services.

Preliminary sharing: Each participant would be invited to give a brief narrative on their experience of a behaviour change or correction due to an act of conscience.

*Instruction:* In a go around, would each of you, briefly to start, share your experience of changing your behaviour on the issue of \_\_\_\_\_. Use your own words and describe the circumstances, your actions, and any consequences. Specifically try to answer, "What motivated you to take this action?" Others are invited to listen and form any questions you might have for later in the conversation.

General discussion: After everyone has shared, a group discussion will follow using the following general questions:

*Instruction:* Having heard each other's story, I invite conversation that offers some comparison of stories, identifying commonalities/differences. Specifically,

- 1) What were the different reasons people were motivated to change their behaviour in these stories? (Motivation)
- 2) If, for example, we called the motivation of "my loyalty to that person/group" a voice of conscience, what are some of the other voices we heard in these stories? (Voices of conscience)
- 3) Was there competition between voices? How were the quarrelling voices dealt with?
- 4) How did these different voices form? Would these current experiences be possible at an earlier age? (Development)
- 5) What feelings were involved? Were some more intense, or forceful than others? (Reflexive Emotions)
- 6) Where was spirituality, or the "sacred" in each of the voices? (The sacred)

Closing: Thank the participants. Advise them that approximately four will be invited for a follow-up one to one interview.

## **Appendix C**

### **Individual Interview Design and Questions**

Interviews will be audio taped for purposes of analysis. Each interview will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon time, and location, that protects privacy.

As with the Focus Group design, questions will collect around the identified objectives for the research, specifically the themes of: awareness, voices, development, source, and reflexive emotions.

Questions are intended to guide the interview and solicit the full depth and breathe of data available. Questions are not intended to establish a strict outline of the interview and can be reworded, dropped etc., as deemed appropriate.

Instructions: In your Letter of Interest and Focus Group participation you shared a specific story of an act of conscience in your life. This conversation does not need to focus exclusively on that story/event, or even the topic of your Focus Group discussion. Some questions I use today, however, may have come specifically out of the Focus Group analysis. Questions will dig a little deeper as to the general nature and formation of your own conscience. We will try to limit our time to 1 -1 and 1/2 hours. I will remind you that you can decline to answer one or more of the questions if you are feeling distressed in any way. At the end we will do a brief checking in to ensure you were comfortable with the process and not in need of further debriefing. If there is any desire for further conversation on the topic or working through feelings that have been triggered, I will assist you in seeking further counseling. I will also provide you with the transcript of this interview for your feedback as to accuracy.

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Establishing relevant demographics**

Q. Can you start with identifying yourself, you name, age, status ....

Q. Can you give me an idea of your background, family, education, church attendance, membership in other significant groups ...

#### **What Governs Behaviour?**

Q. Can you describe your moral character?

Q. In general terms, what determines how you behave morally?

(Note: what ever language the participant uses, I will complete the interview using the same terms. Possible responses to question: values, morals, beliefs, conscience, curiosity, caring)

Q. Do you think your (values, morals,...) determine all of your moral behaviours?  
Why/Why not?

### **Formation**

Q. Where do you think your various (values, morals, ...) came from? Be specific.

Q. Would you say you were “taught” them? How?

Q. Have your (values, morals, ...) changed? What made them change?

Q. Do you think, for you, certain (values, morals, ...) are stronger than others? Why?

### **Multiple Voices**

Q. Thinking of some specific situations, can you name some of your (values, morals, ...)?

Q. Are your (values, morals, ...) consistent in all situations?

Q. Do you ever experience tension, even competition, between your (values, morals, ...)?

### **Maturity**

Q. How has your (values, morals, ...) changed with age?

Q. Do you ever think about consequences?

Q. Do you ever think about someone else’s (values, morals, ...)?

### **Moral Emotions**

Q. Are you aware of your feelings when you are doing (or just did) something because of your (values, morals, ...)? That is, are there emotions involved?

Q. Are any of these emotions complicated?

Q. Would you say this is a negative experience? or positive?

Q. Have the emotions you experienced change over time in similar situations?

### **Source**

Q. Why do you think your (values, morals,...) have this power to affect your behaviour?  
That is, what makes them so important?



Q. Would you say your (values, morals,...) are part of your identity?

### **Conscience**

Q. Has the idea of a conscience been something you are aware of or think much about?

Q. What is your understanding of conscience?

### **Closing**

Q. Do you have any questions, thoughts or impressions that you would want to share at this time? Anything we missed in our conversation?

Q. Do you have any concerns at the conclusion of this interview with the interview itself?

I want to remind you that I will forward to you a transcript of the interview for you to look over for any inaccuracies.

I want to thank you again for participating. It's been great for me. I am grateful that you shared in my research and hope you also enjoyed the experience. I will advise you by letter when I have completed the research and make available to you a summary report if requested.

If at any time you have further questions or concerns you can contact me or my thesis advisor ....

## Appendix D

## Research Ethics Board Clearance Letter



Office of Research Services

Research Ethics Office

St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2S 3A1

T: 905-688-5550, Ext. 3035/4876 F: 905-688-0748

[www.brocku.ca](http://www.brocku.ca)

DATE: June 8, 2009

FROM: Michelle McGinn, Chair  
Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Michael Kompf, Education  
Beryl Holtam, Dr. Brian Ruttan

FILE: 08-317 KOMPFF/HOLTAM  
Masters Thesis/Project

TITLE: Conscience Formation: Pedagogy of the Sacred

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

**DECISION: ACCEPTED AS CLARIFIED**

This project has received ethics clearance for the period of **June 8, 2009 to September 30, 2009** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The clearance period may be extended upon request. ***The study may now proceed.***

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and cleared by the REB. During the course of research no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment, or consent form may be initiated without prior written clearance from the REB. The Board must provide clearance for any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to <http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms> to complete the appropriate form Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form *Continuing Review/Final Report* is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

MM/an

## Appendix E

### Excerpts from Sarah's Interview

Q. If you were to describe yourself, your moral character, how would you describe yourself?

R. Well, I think pretty good. Other people's lives and how they turned out, where they're going with their lives, I think I've done pretty well for myself and I can [count] that to my parents for being so close knit and growing up in the church. I have a clear, not clear like you can't be super, super clear, but I know what's right, I know what's wrong and I know what I feel comfortable with. I'm very sure of what I know. I 'm there's places I don't, like things that you really don't know how you should handle it, like there is always grey areas.

Q. In general terms, what does determine how you behave morally? How do you go about determining your rights and wrongs?

R; well, I remember when I was little and I wore a mini skirt for the first time or something like that and my mom said to me, "Don't wear that if you wouldn't wear it in front of your grandmother. I always think [...] stuff like that. Cloths wise, if I wouldn't wear this in front of my grandmother, then I shouldn't be wearing. If I wouldn't do this, wouldn't tell my mom, then I shouldn't be doing this. So, I tell my mom everything. So if I wouldn't tell her I'm wearing it then I really shouldn't be doing it because I know it's wrong.

Q. Where would you say that your value system, your morals system came from?

R. Mainly from my parents, the church. I think the stories in the bible tell you a lot on how good [...] society should work. The stories, the morals, the ethics behind the stories, tell you how [that's what society is based on anyways] but I think that's good building blocks to start from. Plus your family helps, and the people of the church and people you are really close to. You learn through experience, right. So what you see in other people helps because you have something to look forward to... you look up to them, right, you trust them.

Q. So...I'm trying to determine how this came to you in your own awareness. Do you recall being taught them?

R. It wasn't really taught to me. I see how other people react to certain things; I see how other people talk to other people...I just pick up on it. I know when something doesn't feel right, but I don't know specifically where I got that from. I can't pin point a specific time where I picked this up but they've always been with me and I trust my family 100%. If they say something is not right then I trust them because they [ventured through] life themselves so ...

Q. So, is it challenging you in the sense that you need to examine your belief system around church, and the place of church, or are you sure about that and everyone else is wrong?

R. Well, religion is one of those picky topics where I change my mind every day about what I think. I know what my parents believe; I don't know what my brother and still believe because they're learning on their own. Our parents brought us to church, they did the whole thing, but they're letting us decide on our own what to believe which I think really cool and super nice. I've been through phases where I've been super into church, I've gone to the big gospel one, and I been through stages I didn't go to church at all. I go through stages, and right now I'm pretty happy with what I found. I'm confident in what I believe right now. Only time will tell if I change my mind but that's one of those morals or ethics or values that constantly changes for me and my parents are open with that.

Q. What would make you start changing how you think about something...

R. Something that [...] feeling right? For example I had a boyfriend and he was a born again Christian, he was really into church. I was okay with that because at the time I went to an Anglican Church, I was okay with what I was believing so [...] a time] I kept going to his church more, I kept going, it got to a point where it was too much and I felt like it didn't feel right anymore. So, I broke up with him and I started re-looking at the way I thought about religion. It just felt like I should be fearing God, and that not [cool]. I did not feel right at all and I knew I had to stop that. If I'm not feeling right that's not the way its going.

Q. Do you think certain values or morals are stronger than others?

R. Oh definitely. I big situation ones like church, drugs, alcohol, they're huge; they make a major impact on your life especially how you talk to your parents and stuff like that. And then there are little ones ... like. Facebook for example, I don't have Facebook. I did for a really long time and then it just felt really creepy. I felt like people were stalking me. And I was like, I don't think I can handle this, like having this many people knowing this much about me. And I was going into the program I was going into and it was a co-op program so I knew that employers could go on Facebook and find stuff out about me and I wouldn't have a fair chance. They do it but I think they shouldn't. But I guess it's a good way to find stuff out about people but I just completely got rid of it. I haven't had it for six months. I'm fine, I'm a teenager and I'm still living (laughed).

Q. Thinking of some specific situations (and you have named a few) can you actually name now some of these values or morals that you live by?

R. Well, I give everyone the benefit of the doubt when I meet them. I'm not going to judge them straight away. I don't like judging people even if they are a bit weird. I will give them the benefit of the doubt until I meet them. I'm not going to judge anyone. Even if I do hear something bad about them it doesn't mean I'm going to judge them straight away. I give people respect where respect is deserved. I respect people right off

the bat, unless they do something to disprove that they should be respected. If I don't want to be respected then I don't respect people. But if I want to be respected then I should show them that same thing. Same with being polite, you be polite to people and it makes their day better and then it makes you feel happier, and I like doing it.

Q. What I think I hear you say is that one of your values or moral is that you take it almost as your responsibility to intervene in your friends lives?

R. If they are going to get in trouble and know one is going to help them, then they need something there, they need someone there to tell them or else they just keep going down this slippery road. I will never do drugs but if someone does them and it doesn't affect their life negatively then why should I stop them. It's their own lives, their own beliefs I'm not putting any of my beliefs down their throats at all. I'm not that type of person because I do not like it when people do it to me so why should I do it to someone else. But if [...] something out of school, they have a troubled relationship with their family because of this, I'm going to say something to them. "Maybe you don't see this but I can and I don't want you to turn into something bad." For example, my friend, my best friend in the entire world, has anorexia, [...] and she didn't even realize, right, I didn't realize because it was winter and it's really easy to hide in the winter. When summer rolled around ... I mean bathing suits, shorts, T shirts back out, I noticed it straight away. I don't know why I didn't notice it before, why she wasn't eating as much, it just never clicked. So, like, I saw it in her. I had to talk to her about it. Like, it did happen at a church camp environment, cause that's when I noticed it the most, that's when we were away in the summer together. I sat down with her, "you need to tell me what's up." That's something that would really bother her. And I helped her through it until she was completely healthy again, I did not leave her.

Q. So you felt it was your responsibility? Your commitment to ...?

R. Yeah, she's my friend and I'm going to be there for her. But, also, at the same time, it was really hard for me, so I did tell my mom, she did tell her mom (we're neighbors) who started to notice it as well and knowing that someone else had noticed it, we worked together to try and help her. So it was really like a good thing that it happened. Another example is, my best friend got her girlfriend pregnant, and he told me, and I was the only person he told, and he told me not to tell a soul. Which was really hard because I come from a really good family that doesn't... stuff like this doesn't happen to me, ever. I don't have these hard situations. I don't put myself into situations where I have to deal with hard situations. So, it ate me up inside and I was like, I can't feel this way, so I told my mom. And then later on, I told him, I told my mom. He was okay with it because my mom didn't see him any differently and my friends love my mom, because she's so cool and she is so understanding because she didn't come from [west] background so she feels she doesn't have the right to judge any body else. Which is really cool because I don't judge anyone either, and I pick that up from her even though I'm fine [...]. So, it really helped me to talk to someone who has not experienced it but lived through that time already, so even though I wouldn't know anything about it she knew a lot with good

advice I never thought of. It has helped me from the [release] that gut feeling inside that just bothered me....

I did not want to betray my friendship but I also couldn't hold this inside so I figured I'm not going to tell someone my age who could spread it around, I should tell someone that I can really trust and I know would not tell anyone. She [her mother] did not tell a soul, and I appreciate her so much for that. (Sarah)

Q. Does the authority, in the end, come from within you?

R. Yeah, like, over all I make my decisions and they are my decisions. I listen to my mom's advice but I don't necessarily.... Like, she told me, the pregnancy story, of all the advise she told me, it was all really good, but she told me to tell him to tell his parents and I knew that wasn't a wise decision, because they are very formal, they are very up tight, but, I did tell him that my mother said that. He never told his parents ...

## Appendix F

### Excerpts from Susan's Interview

Q. Can you describe your moral character?

R. If I were to describe myself, I'd think that I'm inspiring because I've gone through a lot and instead of being all about me I'm helping other people. My morals are that no one is less than one person. Every one is equal. You should never sacrifice yourself for someone else. And I think that I'm very trustworthy and honest, and humble, because I've gone through all sorts ...

Q. In general terms, what determines how you behave morally?

R. It's all for myself, how I behave morally. I think of it on my own. I don't have my parents determine how I act morally. I just believe what I believe, and I stick to it. [...] strong belief.

Q. Have these values and morals changed as you've grown up?

R. Yeah, I think a bit because when you are little you don't understand what [...] things going on around you, everything is easy and fun, and then you get older every thing hits you, reality comes and you see what the world is actually about, so, everything changed, and you're more informed about third world countries and other places that need help [...].

Q. ... what makes some morals stronger?

R. From how you see your friends are and how you deal with things, like when I lived on my own ... just stuff that happens to you, like how expensive food is or how you have to be on time, you can't be late and everything that has to play out, for everything to work. So those experiences and noticing that not all friends are true friends and realizing that so you don't [money to ... to them ... they call you, so ...] or help them out in some way, you realize that as well. That's how I think your morals are changed because how else are they going to know anything if you're not going [anything from you own] experiences. You have to fall on your face a few times before you realize [...]

Q. . If you think about little kids learning ... what would be something a little kid learns at 2 or 3 year old, not to ....

R. Steal ...

Q. Yeah, that's great because it does happen in the home ... or it can be stealing as in from a store somewhere outside of the house. So, a little kid might accept that norm that value, that moral, because there parents said, "Don't steal", but would that change when they are older if they didn't have life experience?

R. I think so because I remember, [lots of ...] but me and my friends use to steal from the stores and it would be so easy and fun and you don't realize how it affects people, and so we were little and we didn't [...] grade 9, a few years back, and we didn't care, we were young, we didn't realize how it hurts people and our parents didn't enforce it (the no stealing moral) they didn't know they only enforced it when we were little so that moral doesn't play out as you grow, you didn't have the consequence, you don't know what happens and thinking, "This won't happen to me", so that [all plays into effect] and we never did get caught but eventually it just stopped [...] I don't feel good about myself.

Q. It was a feeling that changed your behaviour?

R. Yeah, as well as when you [...] I realize when people steal from you, you see what's like. [...] same with my story, you see when you are on your own, and people steal from you that doesn't feel good, and that's an experience you come through.

Q. You corrected your own behaviour as you thought about the consequences?

R. Yeah, what it does to other people and how it affects them and how it actually hurts then and how it just not morally right.

Q. Thinking of some specific situations, can you name some specific values and morals? Think about situations where you changed your behaviour, and therefore this was the value or moral that you were working on.

R. When you are kids you are always taught don't do drugs, don't do drugs, its [...] always always into your head, and when you are older it doesn't seem as hard and its not the peer pressure that they tell you and its easier to get into and easier escape route from reality and you start to take that path. When you do them and you get into all these drugs and you don't realize who you are anymore its just to hide from reality, kind of going back to that kid stage, because you don't understand what is going on and you are not worrying, and then you start looking at yourself and you are seeing all your friends not going anywhere, well your friend, not real friends, not going any where just using you and the drugs you realize as you want this to be your life, or do you want to excel, and you see that you don't want to be like crazy drug fiend, into all this stuff and be no where, just a bum, so, in my experience, I just completely stopped, all of a sudden one day I had enough, lost all contact with ever single friend, lied to them, even though I don't like lying but lie to them in a good morally way because I don't want to put myself into risk [...] and I benefited from that because I realized that drugs are morally wrong and you won't understand that until you actually go through the whole process.

Q. Think of a situation where the answer just wasn't easy? Situations where the clarity wasn't there.

R. I was with a boyfriend I thought I really cared about really well, but not going no where in life, and for me I didn't see it clearly because I was in love, and I think what I



did not see clearly was that I wasn't going anywhere and it was really hard for me to do it because you were trying to listen to your heart and trying to listen to your mind at the same, and the conflict, and it was really hard to do the right thing, because you do not know what is the right thing because you've been torn in two different directions. So doing the right thing could leave to pain and that's what it did lead to.

Q. How has your values and morals changed with age?

R. I'm more conscious, more aware, because when you are little every thing is fun and [...] I do what mommy says I do, and you don't have a choice, there's no choice [...] and when you are older you have the choice of where you are going, and who you want to be and now its not all on your parents its all on you, and that's where I think it changes.

Q. Are you aware of your feelings when you are doing (or just did) something because of a moral decision? Are you aware of the feelings that go with it?

R. Yeah, because you have this gut feeling, your intuition comes into play, especially for women, they have a very strong intuition. So, I always get that [instant] feeling, that upset stomach that makes you feel like your almost sick [and when there's nothing wrong] I'm happy, you just feel go about yourself. So, yeah, I'm aware of it.

Q. Have the emotions you experienced change over time in similar situations?

R. Yeah they have, because when you're little it's easy and more happy I'd say and you would cry over spilt milk. And when you are older you understand that spilt milk is not a big deal, that there are bigger things in life to make you ...

Q. So what is the changing of emotion that goes with that?

R. Maturity level, who you are, and what you become.

Q. How does the emotion change then when you still have the same "spilt milk" incident but you are not going to react the same way?

R. Because when you are little you are temper tantruming, you are kicking, you're screaming, you're throwing fits and you don't really know that [during] that time you don't get anything from it. When you are older you realize if I kick and scream I'm not getting away where, it's not going to help me, it's just going to make the situation worse and make people more mad at me.

Q. And are you still feeling the emotion and just managing it differently or do you actually feel a different emotion?

R. I think you are still feeling the same emotions except you can control it more and you are not freaking out more. So you are as much upset but not over the small things, only over the big things.

Q. Why do you think your values and morals have this power to affect your behaviour?

R. I think its our ... it makes us feel better about ourselves, or worse, and it comes [...] who we are because when we're inn a situation [...] problem and you're thinking about all the consequences and what's happening, you realize something inside of you hurts if you don't do what you think is right.

Q. So, what makes them so important?

R. [...] It's who you are and how you feel. And how you feel about it makes it part of you you've become.

Q. Has the idea of a conscience ever been something you have ever thought about?

R. All the time, because your conscience is part...like its like what you are thinking in your head, or what your gut feeling is telling you so your conscience was coming into play when it's something bad, when it's something good you just feel good [...] good positive feelings...

Q. So would you have ever used the word conscience?

R. For my morals?

Q. Yeah.

R. Not [...] morals a little bit differently than conscience. Your conscience is weighing every thing out, your morals is just what you are made of.

Q. So, when we talked about the conflicting morals are you saying that its your conscience that is working with those conflicting morals?

R. Yeah. They are working together as a team.

Q. What is your understanding of conscience?

R. It's what weighs out the bad and the good and what your intuition is telling you, what your head is telling you, what you heart is telling you.

## Appendix G

### Excerpts from Tommy's Interview

Q. You have a history of church attendance?

R. Yep, I've gone to Grace Church most of my life. I've been a server at Grace Church, helping out with the piece at the front. I've done that for probably 8 years, every week. But now I've switched over to a Community Church because it is a little bit more upbeat and modern and fits my life style a little bit better. Some things that I have gotten involved with; I was very involved with YMCA, with boy scouts, a lot of extra curricular at school, with sports, soccer, rowing, football, cheese club, [...] UN, I've done elementary school band, high school band, every band you could do at my high school. I play trumpet myself. I've gotten involved with the student council, there's so much more I can't really remember.

Q. Of all of that is there any groups that really stand out in terms of a sense of strong membership, a strong sense of community?

R. Very much so with my rowing crew. We were a close knit group of friends. Two of the guys have fallen out a little bit just because they've moved away from school. Still, most the time me and my friends get together [...] my high school rowing program. Mostly at church I do a lot small handyman jobs where people at the church need help, because they're elderly and they can't really do it them self. So, I'm more than happy to help out.... I'm close knit with that. Even in my church I've been getting in with a small group there.

Q. In general terms, what determines how you behave morally? What language would you put around that?

R. Hum.... mostly my faith, like I said before, also my upbringing with my family. My [...] faith allows me to keep the strong sense of what is right. It gives me an idea of what I think should be right, so I follow that. Also the family, we've always been very very backing each other, so if I had a problem I would go to them. So, with my experience with my family has allowed me to make more of a moral conscious of myself.

Q. You used the word faith, so, would you use that language or would you use the language of morals, values, ethics ... What language would you use? Your faith helps to set your ...?

R. My faith helps to set what I think is right? I'd call them principals, guidelines. They form the basis of where my morals come from, but even then I [...] myself, on myself... I find a lot of the bible is kind of [dated], since it hasn't been updated dated since 100 AC, so you can't take every thing, you have to try to understand it in the context of today. So, I use what I need in the bible and I use that to ...I try to bring it into the world of today. It's more a basic principal, a base, where you can build off of.

Q. Do you think your values, morals, your principals determine all of your moral behaviours?

R. Most of it. A lot of the time the world of today goes against what my morals are, and so, things like peer pressures and outside factors [bring ...] change my judgment on things ... but, for the most part I try to stick with my morals, and that's what I think makes me who I am. A lot of the people now a days do not have very good strength [and] morals they accept what's going on around them. I find it's important to look at what's going on around and see whether or not I think its right.

Q. When you talk about your moral behaviour, is that taught?

R. Moral behaviourr, I believe is more taught, because .... at school and such they teach you a lot of things about what is socially acceptable and stuff like that, like racism and bullying and sexism. They're all taught that those things are mostly bad, and you should stay away from them.

Q. How does that transfer to your own behaviour?

R. It transfers to my own behaviour because .... my moral behaviour ... depending how strong you believe in your morals you, your behaviours will mimic your moral behaviour. So, if you really believe in your morals and you have a strong judgment, then what you actually do will be very very similar to what you think you should do.

Q. Would you say your morals and principals have changed?

R. I would definitely believe that they have changed. When you're young you don't really have a very strong moral value, just because you're not in the thinking stage yet, you're in "Lets go out and play". So, in that stage that's where mostly where moral behaviour is taught, so you just mimic what you are told to do. But when you are older and you start to think and start to formulate your own goals that your moral behaviour and your morals will change from what you were taught when you were younger.

Q. So what makes them change, you are saying, is the capacity to start reflecting or thinking about ...

R. Yeah, what makes them change is your ability to start processing data and start thinking on your own.

Q. Any other comment about strength of morals, why some are stronger than others?

R. I think it is very much to do with how you actually act out your morals in the situations that you are in. If you are using a lot moral morals in one area they will get stronger, very much to [...]. If you have to use your morals in one area they will get a lot

stronger but if you don't have to do in another area it won't get as strong, you won't have as much an opinion a belief in it because you haven't had to use it.

...if you don't have a strong belief in your own morals, than society will change your morals into what they want it to be. I think that is a lot of what is happening today, a lot of people do not have a strong moral base and so they are just accepting what society is telling them". Here Tommy is indicating that society is not necessarily the source of good morals and values, or strong ones, and that independent thought might be relinquished to mainstream culture.

Q. Thinking of some specific situations, can you name some of your morals or your principals that you live by?

R. Probably one of my biggest morals is the desire to do everything to the best of my ability. I think hard work, [...] ethics and the idea that you don't need a reward to do something; a lot of things should just come from just the goodness of your heart. A lot of the times... I always go into things... any job I do I say "How can I do this to the best of my ability?" It doesn't matter that I'm just taking out the trash. "How can I do this to the best of my ability?" I can make sure I put it [into the ...] after I take out the trash, I can make sure that if anything drips I wipe it up instead of just taking out the trash and letting that be how it is. I try to make sure I do it as it should be done the first time and every time I do it.

Q. I think I heard a personal excellence, would you use that ...?

R. I think personal excellence is very important but it all depends on what your motive is. Personal excellence is good and all but if its just to further exceed yourself...but I think it should be because its just what you think is right.... If I wanted to I can go out and I can achieve and keep on achieving, keep on achieving and just take everything for myself, but I think that's wrong. You should look at the society as a whole. If you're going out and you are doing as best as you can but you're pushing people aside saying "Out of my way, I want this" then they lose.

Q. How has your principals/morals actually changed with your age?

R. I think it is just a lot about refining your beliefs. When you are a child you have these beliefs that have been imposed on you but when you get older you gain experiences where the beliefs are challenged and I can't remember any of them, that's why I can't give you an example.

Q. What does refining mean to you?

R. Refining, it's repeated knocking. It's a great quote from one of my teachers, my teacher, "Repeated knocking polishes the stone". So, you have a stone, you have another stone and you keep on knocking it until it becomes polished, smoothed gem in the end. With morals, you have your basis in your morals as a child but then you ... society tries

to protect you and make it so you don't have to make too many morals decisions when you are young because you don't have the capacity to make those decisions, as you get older you get those experiences and your beliefs are challenged and whether or not they hold or not changes your beliefs and sometimes you just have to modify it. So, a lot of the times that's how you change your morals is you come up to a conflict where something is going against what your morals are and if your morals are challenged and you sort of see, "Okay my morals are a little off", you look at the answer to your challenge, different things can happen, you can either keep on with your morals, "I don't care what I believe in is right" or "You know what, I'm not right, it should be this way" and then you modify your moral to adapt to the one incidence.

... You're told as a child that you should never tell a lie, but then you come up to a situation where if you tell the truth, I'll give you an example, I lose stuff all the time, so when I was a child I would tell my parents, "Oh, I lost something" but then I would get scolded and told I shouldn't lose stuff. So now if I lose something and they ask me if I have it, I say "Yes", because I know I don't want to be scolded. So, I put it off, put it off, until either find the object, can't find the object and it doesn't matter anymore its in the past.

Q. Any other one comes to mind regarding the complexity of morals?

R. Another thing for me, my concept of love and romance has changed a lot, just by my experiences with girlfriends that has gone totally wrong, or gone okay. I use to believe that "Oh, she likes me, that means I'm in love, that means we are going to get married; when I was little, little. But now I understand, "Oh, she likes me, well, does she like me, does she like my body, does she like my laughter, what part of me does she like"? And does that go into love? I still don't have any answer to that question something's get so complicated that you just have to go by your gut feeling, which isn't so much a moral its just "Oh, I have to do something, eeny, meena, mina, mo..

Q. Do you ever think about someone else's moral character or their principals?

R. Like I said before, I think of society as a whole, we're not just individuals. We're all in this together. Sometimes I will make actions and decisions that go against my morals to appease the mass, which sometimes gets me into trouble.

Q. Do you have an example of that? At school? Church?

R. I can think a lot about at camp because it's a very small community. Almost 90% of the staff do not have strong Christian values and so I sometimes push my Christian values under the table to match what every one else is doing. (when requested for an example, again, he struggled). I don't usually make my opinions known unless I think that my opinion ... a lot of the times ... I think of my actions before I do it, so, something is happening and I have my opinion but everyone else has a different opinion on it, I don't usually raise my voice because it's already defeated by the majority, so I just except what their decision is.

Q. Has something been important enough to you that you have tried to change or correct someone else? Have you ever had that experience?

R. (silence) I don't find that happening a lot more nowadays because I decided to work with younger people. I'm actually tutoring a grade 8 kid, and I don't think he has very strong morals and he also doesn't have very strong belief in his morals, so they can be changed. One example was that, just last time he was saying that he was going out for Devils night. And so I said, "What are you going to do?" He's like, "I'm going to go and hang out with my friends". "So, what are they going to do?" "Oh, probably go and egg somebody". I, like, "Okay, do you think that's right?" He's like "It's a lot of fun". "But do you think its right?" He's like, "I don't know". "Have you ever been egged?" "Yeah, my mom's car got egged a while ago". "Well, how pleasant was that experience?" "Oh, she was very very mad" "So, you are about to go give this experience to someone else". "No, I'm not doing it". "But you are with the people that are doing ". He's like, "Oh, so?" I'm like, "Aren't you implying your consent that this is a good thing just because you're being with them and you're laughing with them": "Oh, I guess so". Again, that's is just a small case, where it's one-on-one, so I feel that I can impose my morals because this is a child who's morals are changing from childhood morals to what his morals will be for almost the rest of his life. I'm imposing my morals because I believe I have strong, good morals ...

Q. Has the idea of a conscience been something you are aware of or think much about?

R. I have thought about it and a lot of people do conscience as like the good angel and the bad devil and your shoulder, but, I think there is a lot more than that. It is a lot more complex. Especially for me because I think everything through. I don't really have a good angel and bad devil. I have 50 of all the different ... from pure sainthood to pure evil, I have 50 people in my head ... I use people just because that is what everyone one uses but I don't it is people, I think it is myself and my experiences and I think through...its not like somebody has a voice, its "this is how I know". I've had this experience and this is what happened. I try to relate everything together ...

Q. What is your understanding of conscience?

R. Conscience is the process of making the decision. It's going off of your experiences and your beliefs and your morals and pulling them all together to have arguments for the good and bad of a decision.

## Appendix H

### Excerpts from Jennifer's Interview

Q. In a broad stroke, if you were to describe yourself, not in a book or anything, how would you describe yourself morally, how would you describe your moral character?

R. (pause) I guess I'm kind of worried about not living up to expectations of what I'm suppose to do morally. I was brought up through the Roman Catholic school so that stuff is all pounded into my head. Like, does and don'ts. [...]

Q. So, lets turn that around, so, you are saying what your fear is, or what your goal is, but, if you could describe your moral character right now....

R. I don't really know how to [...]

Q. Okay, that's fine. You don't need to worry about that. If you were to simply look at it as good moral character, you're a good person? or, you don't think of yourself as a good person? Generally speaking, would you consider yourself a good person?

R. I guess ... (softly spoken)

Q. Where do you think your morals came from? How your conscience was formed?

R. Elementary school ... staying with my grandparents a lot.

Q. When you say elementary school you are focusing on the Catholic school?

R.. Yes, from JK to grade 8.

Q. Was there actual classes?

R. I've actually blocked most of it from my mind because I hated it. But, every day there was a religion class, and once a week when I was at ... up the street we were taken to the chapel and we had class there.

Q. What did you hate?

R. I had done the things that they were doing far before them and I was made fun of because of it. Or, they had done some things with their religion that I wasn't required to do so they would make fun of me for that too.

Q. So you were set apart for not being Catholic?

R. Yeah. I was "The Anglican"



Q. Have your morals changed?

R. Yeah.

Q. What made them change? What happens when they are changing?

R. Because, it's just the people around me help them change. In elementary school, I didn't really know, I didn't really have [any morals] on how to treat people my age, and now that I've got friends my age, I know how act around them, I guess. And what's right to do around them, and what I shouldn't do around them,

Q. That's developed?

R. Yes.

Q. So some of the change has been because of your circumstances changing?

R. Ye.

Q. What else do you think has moved or changed some of your [values or] morals? To develop them? (There was a pause and no response from participant.) Can you give an example of something you might have thought one way when you were younger, or even last week, and now you think of it differently?

R. I use to think [I use to believe] that I couldn't be around kids my age because I would be hurt so I was always with people either very younger than me or very much older than me. Now I'm okay with everybody.

Q. You use the words, "knowing what's right to do and what's wrong to do", do you have an example of where something you know was right, or wrong, before that you have now changed ...?

R. I guess I use to fight back a lot. There were a couple of physical confrontations in my elementary school [involving me].

Q. Do you ever think about other people's values or morals?

R. Yeah. Actually, this is still going on, but with some of my friends planning a trip for next year, and I'm the diplomatic one in my group, so, "Okay, so and so does not like the fact that we're all going to be in the same hotel room even though we're all girls. But, so and so does not really care and wants to bring her brother, and, I can see all the different morals that everyone has, and I'm trying to be aware of them as I [...] "why don't we do this instead of this ..."

## Appendix I

### Excerpts from Focus Group

Becky

I just kind of realized that this thing that we love, this nature, the trees all the beauty, all the stuff is in danger and that we should protect it. That was kind of a shift for me, the idea that something that I love is not able to protect itself. That something I love so much should be protected.

Beth

When I was in first year university I made a lot of choices, to do things like, stay in and study and drive myself absolutely nuts ... instead of going out and taking some time off. And it was also hard because I had a roommate that was like that, and her life style was such that she enjoyed that, that was who she was, she could sit down at the desk and be happy and study for seven hours straight. And I discovered I'm not that kind of person. So I spent a lot of first year struggling with a balance between how much work I could do and how much time I could take off to be happy [with things] I still haven't quite found the balance yet but I definitely realized in first year I was not enjoying my life very much. And that because of all the studying I was doing my marks were going down, as weird as that sounds, its true. So, I wasn't taking the time to relax. This year its my goal to try and fix that and work towards being a happier person as well as increasing my marks by not studying quite as much, if that makes sense.

Peter

[... there] seems to be a certain level of appreciation for the bigger picture of things because, for instance, with fast food or [...] its very easy to not appreciate the implications of some of the smaller actions. ... how these smaller actions where there is nothing inherently wrong, for lack of a better word, about them, but when taken in the broader stroke of things in sort of being to see the broader implications; start to understand better the affects of them. Being able to understand that at a certain point in studying, more won't make your grades higher, just makes you stressed. At a certain point consumerism has just gone too far, whatever. It sort of being able to see the forest through the trees.

Becky

Even then sometimes you have the tendency, if you realize that there is something bad happening you might not want to acknowledge, its easier to stay where you are comfortable. It's hard to make the change, unless you see something really bad to kind of say I'm going to change the way I'm acting, to make a difference, to go out of your comfort zone.

Beth

I was in Kenya this past May with a team of about 10 people, there were 5 of us from Queens [...] just finished first year so we were pretty close and there were three that were more team leaders. We had this issue where, although it is [legal] in Kenya to smoke in public, the three leaders would smoke all the time. And we found that towards the middle of the trip there was a very obvious divide between the three smokers that would go off to smoke and then the five of us sitting around and complaining about the fact that our team was being torn apart by this [...], what's even more confusing and frustrating for the five of us was that if we went to the grocery store and we felt like a treat for ourselves so we would buy a small chocolate bar or something despite the fact that it was slightly consumeristic, but then our team leaders would say "you should really try and step out of that, try and step out of your western culture, and try and get away from your addictions", but then they go and buy 3 packages of cigarettes. So, there was a huge confliction between the five of us and the three of us. The five of us would complain about it and talk about whether we would say something about it, but at the same time we were 10 people in Kenya, how do you approach three people about the fact that they're tearing the team apart but not realizing it. In the long run, nothing was really done about it. There was definitely a lot of conflicting voices in that experience.

Becky

[...] at high school where small things can just be so big between [...] and just recently... I was really frustrated at the amount that all my girl friends would just come up to me and just talk about other girls, so much meaningless dislike towards people. That really frustrated me, when I found after a while I didn't know what to do because there isn't really anything you could do, but I kind of told people "You can't talk about other people to me because I can't take the hatred anymore". But there wasn't anything... I don't think you can ... to change people [...] of course people are going to dislike people But at that time I just told people "I don't want you to talk about it to me ..." I didn't actually ask them to stop, I just didn't ask them to say it to me [...]

Peter

It was just personal experience ... rather than just having society tell you your values, or maybe like your parents telling your values, you're kind of creating your own values, so its not somebody else's conscience anymore its your own.

James

I can think ... to go as far back as I can, being bullied when I was younger, so, having been put in that situation myself I began to understand what other people would feel like if I [...] and sort of generate a conscience that way being able to understand better both sides of a situation. Having been bullied would help prevent me from being the bully later on. Having seen both sides.

Becky

When I was in day care, I was 4 or 5, and it was the most guilt I ever felt in my entire life, I took this little coin set, plastic little coins, and I loved the loonies, I don't know why, they were little plastic coins [...] I knew they weren't real but I loved them so much [...] so I took one of the loonies one day and slipped it into my pocket as we were going to nap time. I kept it, I had this little jar and I put it in the bottom of the jar, and everyday when I was home I would take it out and put it back and this continued for a year and I had this little plastic coin, and it didn't feel bad at all because I kind of thought they didn't notice, they didn't notice at all.

Facilitator

Did you know it was wrong?

Becky

I did, I did, because when I walked into the day care I was looking at all the teachers, and looking at them. Every day I was looking at them, and I started feeling more and more guilty. It went on for months and months and I looked at it ever single day, I started this guilt, just kind of built up inside me and I realized what if other kids want to play what if they don't have enough loonies. It was just guilt inside me for taking this from the day care. One day, after about a year later I started crying and it was the morning and I went over to my mom and I was carrying it, and I was "Mom I took a year ago". So, we called the day care we made a point of walking over and giving them this fake coin.

James

In grade 4, this school I was at there's these sand pits for where they do [contractors field day ...] standing on, running on, etc etc. what we had done ... if you dig down deep enough eventually it the stuff is wet and you can make stuff out of it, so we build cities and buildings and stuff, the sand there was like two sort of groupings of it and then afterwards we decided we were going to each destroy the others one. Originally we were [...] balls of clay, throwing it at the other buildings, but balls of clay took a lot a while to make, sort of a pain in the butt, it's a lot easier to just use rocks.... That worked fine until my friend Nick bent down to pick one up and took one in the head. And so he ended up having to go to the hospital, I think he ended up with a concussion, it was a decent size rock that he took to the head after been forcefully from ...

So you lied?

James

Yes, I lied. I knew I was lying. I ended up feeling really guilty, everyone else had sort of originally gone along with it in part because they didn't want to call me out on it. But also it meant they were sort of scared too, I'm sure. So by the end of the day we had sort

of decided what we were going to do about it and ended up sending, who is the one who had actually thrown it to go and explain what had happened and we all got called down to the office and I'm reasonably certain I ended up bawling my eyes out. Ian got suspended for a day and all of us had detentions for about a month. They talked to all of us individually and appreciated that it was accidental. It was stupid, but it was accidental.

Beth

I think when my conscience was formed was through me doing things and not realizing they were wrong and then my mother saying, "How would you feel if someone did that to you?" We weren't really sent to our rooms, or punished, as kids, we were just to think about how would you feel and then we would get sad [...] that was punishment. I remember there was this one time where Becky and I had gone for a walk, I must have been grade 3, and I decided I didn't want to walk anymore so I left Becky in the middle of our neighbourhood [...] actually I don't think I was sent to my room or punished but they asked me to seriously think about what would it feel like if I was the smaller one and had been left outside in -5 degree weather by myself. At first it didn't mean too much, like, "Oh yes it would be not so good to happen to me, I'm sorry" and then I would forget about it. But, that was said every time I did something like that and after a while I started to think about that for myself before I did things. A huge part of that for me were my parents.

Becky

I remember in grade 8, I snuck out and then I got caught and then mom and dad [...] they did really punish me, I was actually, I was grounded, but the main punishment was I had to write a list of what I wanted to be when I was older, the steps I would take and how I would become what I wanted to do when I was older, and also how my actions hurt other people. I think just them getting me to write that out was the best way to deal with it because it made me think rather than just getting upset with me and being grounded, I actually thought it through.

Beth

Spirituality for me is the most positive kind of connection that you can have between people. In a lot of these stories, like going to foreign or possibly third worlds countries, you realize that fairness and equality and that energy between the people is way out of [sink] when you have a dish washer and they don't have running water. There's definitely a sense of acknowledging yourself in comparison to other people and maintaining a balance, and for me seeing that balance is extremely spiritual and it helps me get through more difficult times. For example going to church, and just seeing people together, its not so much what they're doing as the fact that they doing it together and its positive, not [hurting ...] So, a sense of equality and fairness is definitely [...] in things like not being a huge consumer in Western Society and not consuming energy without taking a second thought about what you are doing to the rest of the world [...].

Becky

I would think that there is a definite sense of sacred ... spirituality, but, I think a lot of the time environmentalism can become its own religion. It can get a little bit wonky if some people really really try to force environmentalism upon other people, you have to do this or your not a human being, your not part of this kind of environment religion, and it gets kind of complicated. It can be difficult when you just believe in this environmentalism. I don't know, its something I'm developing myself, what are my beliefs when it comes to the environment, do I put people in front of trees? For me its not an environmental religion, it's more environmental spirituality, I think those things are very different, its more what is spirituality is inner protection. The environment is something sacred and it should be protected, not something you don't need to force on people but for me its something that is sacred and special.

Janice

I feel like spirituality has a lot to do with how well you know yourself. And obviously conscience has a lot to do with how well you know yourself. Because it is you, basically.

James

I'm really very unsure of myself [and] a lot of my beliefs. So, I get sort of nervous talking about spirituality a lot of the times. In terms of ... I guess what ends up being sacred and [trusting my conscience] [...] myself, the actions that I'm making. I tend to be a very big picture sort of person. When it comes to making decisions where there is a conscience aspect involved, its not, is this right for me to be doing, its if every single person on the face of the earth were to do what I'm doing now, would that be the right thing? Where the sacred aspect comes in, is, am I [carrying] myself in such a way that I could look someone in the eye and truthfully and honestly say , if everybody on the face of the earth was acting the way I just did that would be okay. I think there's been ... tape ended.

Peter

It's an internal, gut, feeling. [...] that guides your choices.

... importance of experiential learning and self exploration as appose to external influences, parental or societal [control]. "There are times when the external influences spark the internal conversation but at the end of the day the conscience has to come from the internal or experiential ..."

Becky

[...] for me, like Beth, the connection with things that are most important [...] a mixture of all the voices [of all the things that are precious to you] nature, other people, social responsibility, self responsibility, all those things [...]

Beth

[...] it tends to be something I don't say too much about because it becomes habit [...] The times that I do realize my conscience, are times when the two options, whether that are right or wrong, are both or neither [...] when pushing towards the better options, and all the options have some level of discomfort for me. As soon as I have to do the right thing by stepping out of the bubble, it becomes much more obvious which would be the best thing which would be the worse thing, and that's when [...] the most difficult to deal with [...] is telling me to do the right thing] in those situations I don't want to, or I know that I would feel really out of place [...] if I did do the right things. [...].